NORMANBURN.

VOL. IV.

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NORMANBURN;

OR,

THE HISTORY

OF

A YORKSHIRE FAMILY.

A Novel.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF HARDENBRASS AND HAVERILL;

OR, THE SECRET OF THE CASTLE;—

RED ROB, OR THE WITCH OF SCOT-MUIR, COMMONLY CALLED MADGE THE SNOOVER,—CONIRDAN, OR THE ST. KILDIANS; AND THE HISTORY OF JULIUS FITZ-JOHN.

Stultitiæ nomine multa tegit.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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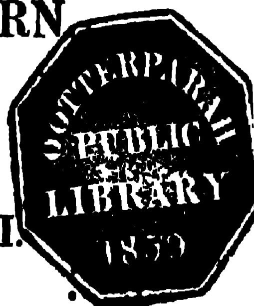
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NORMANBURN.



BOOK VIII.

CHAP. I.

A Specimen of courtly Flattery, and homely Sincerity.—A new Acquaintance, and tender Feelings.—Mr. Bonham appears to act ungenerously.—A singular Stranger.—Good Resolutions.

Mrs. Mary was not the only person who wondered at Felix, for Miss Trehern was, if possible, still more astonished. This lady was, as she called it, *a mass of sensitive tenderness*, and, finding in Mrs. Glassington, a willing auditor, she gave her a history of her own heart, and

her own loves, and her own sufferings, greedily listened to by Mrs. Glassington, who, in return, related all her sorrows, and the anxious moments she was now suffering, from the uncertainty she was in, respecting *when* she was once more to be clasped to the breast of animated love. But Angelina, as she liked to be called, did not confine her cares to her own case; she trembled for her Cecilia, and dreaded that this abstraction of her lover might hurt her feelings; nay, so anxious was she, that she persuaded Mrs. Glassington to accompany her to a seat nearer Lady Corillia, where they could hear all that passed. With regard to Miss Moleson, however, all that passed was a mere nothing; for when they reached their station, Sir James was assuring Lady Corillia, that the tale (taken from one of her novels) when dramatised, had no effect at all, compared to that it produced in its simple state. "I confess," said Sir James, "that moving cir-

cumstances, and pathetic instances have a surprising effect on my feelings! It is more than the pleasing pain of sympathy!—it is downright agony! and I am so well aware of it, that when I go to see any thing of the kind, I submit to it as a duty; just as I should to a surgical operation. Upon my veracity, I can assure your Ladyship, that when I went to see the ———, it was with this idea! and the acting was inimitable! A——i was immortal! Never did I see any thing like that scene with the urn; never! yet I lived through that! the effect it produced was nothing to that of the simple tale!"

"Bless me! that's odd!" cried Lady Corillia, "and contrary to general experience! usually, the scene has double effect when embodied, and set in a tangible shape before the organs of perception. It is then the mind grasps objects. What can this difference be attributed to?"

"To nothing but the inimitable art and talent of the writer," cried Sir James.

"Oh!" uttered the lady, blushing through her rouge with pleasure.

"Upon my soul, I think so!" continued Sir James; "never, no never have I been able to read that mass of pathos without being heart-broken! never have I gone through it without laying down the book three or four times, and cursing my existence. I was talking about it to Lady H— last year, when I was down at the Lodge. 'Now,' says she, 'Sir James, you have never had courage to read this through. Now it is a decided rainy day, you cannot possibly go out—the heavens sympathise—all in unison—now promise me that you will not stir till you have gone *through* it. You shall promise me.' Well, I took the book; but may I die the death, if I could get on! I was in an agony—I ran to her Ladyship—I petitioned for one hour's cessation. Let me but lay down the book for one hour—

Good God! I shall die! She was obliged to comply, I assure you."

Such was the bare-faced flattery with which Sir James was feeding Lady Corillia, and to which she listened with unfeigned pleasure. The matter was, the gentleman was publishing some dramas, and he expected that she would repay him *in kind* in her next work.

If Miss Trehern had not been the bosom friend and confidante of Cecilia, it might easily have been supposed, that she was herself in love with Mr. Bonham; for she looked so long, and so languishingly at him, that even Mrs. Glassington, not famous for her observation, was struck with it. Bonham himself invariably turned from her with a disgust it was difficult to conceal, and he had secretly resolved to take his wife out of the reach of her pernicious conversation.

The party separated by degrees, and the following morning was employed by Lord and Lady Brushwood, in shewing their friends the preparations they had

made for the reception of their Illustrious Visitor, who was expected in the course of the day. The Earl had all the formality of littleness about him, and, if there was one thing on which this peer piqued himself more than another, it was having commodious hen-houses and pigstyes.

The morning peregrinations, then, did not end without a visit to these evidences of the architectural genius of Lord Brushwood; and after surveying them, and admiring the elegant and commodious apartments for the hens and chickens, the party was going towards the pigstyes, where, under a tree, stood Jacky Walker, with all his apparatus, cleaning knives. Lord Brushwood, a very formal personage, looked at Jacky, and Jacky looked at his Lordship; then with a dismal groan he exclaimed, "Wae be sh—te thee, my Lord! thou's fund me at last!" His Lordship, who certainly did not expect to find Jacky, any more than to be thus saluted, turned away in silent disgust,

while the rest of the party, that is, those who understood Jacky's language, with difficulty refrained from laughter.

When they returned to the house, they found Bonham welcoming a Colonel Milson, an old and intimate friend of his, who had heard, at Harrogate, that he was to be found at the Park; and Lady Brushwood, who was much struck with the Colonel's appearance, and knew his family, insisted most graciously that he should remain and grace her fête. "If you could refuse *me*, Colonel," said she, "I think you would hardly run away from such a party as this:" at the same time drawing his attention to the young ladies, who were arranging some flowers at the other end of the room. The Colonel very gallantly assured her Ladyship, that he was but too happy in her commands, and requested an introduction to the ladies. When he heard Miss Moleson's name, he begged permission to kiss her hand, as the old and tried friend of Mr. Bonham; a

favour the lady granted most graciously. He said nothing particular to any one else, but gazed with evident admiration on Mabella, and then asked, where the Mrs. Bonhams were. Those ladies, who knew his character, were really happy to see him; and a pleasant conversation ensued, which was interrupted by a proposal to go on a fishing party. Of this party Lord Sniddy was the leader and commander in chief, and the servants with the necessary tackle, &c. being ready, they began their march towards the Ponds.

There being many gentlemen, the ladies did not want arms to assist them in walking; and Colonel Milson, separating Mrs. Mary Bonham and Mabella, begged that he might have the pleasure of being their escort. He talked, during the walk, of nothing but Felix, and the enviable situation he was in; wished that he had married two years ago,—as he was five years older than Bonham, he did not like

his getting the start of him. "Why, really, Colonel! you may soon change your wishes into something more real, if they are not mere wishes!" said Mrs. Mary; "we have in this good county of York a very serious number of very sweet girls undisposed of; who, I fear, will most of them be of my party at last."

"Yes, Madam! certainly there is a pretty large number! but to own the truth, I have not the courage to woo or to wed all the arts and sciences at once," replied the Colonel; "provided my wife had a certain degree of cultivation of mind, I should not care whether she could play, sing, or recite, or not: indeed, to own the truth, I would rather hire professors to do those things."

"According to modern ideas, I must say you have a singular taste!" said Mrs. Mary.

"No, no! not singular, Mrs. Bonham!" answered the Colonel; "I know

Bonham thinks exactly as I do! he thinks half the sex is spoiled!"

"Surely," said Mabella, "it is very delightful to be accomplished."

"You think so, my dear, and with some reason," said Mrs. Mary; "but you have not had advantages yourself, and, I fancy, you over-estimate them. I have seldom seen the minds of very accomplished women what I should wish them, and, generally speaking, they are dissatisfied and unhappy."

"I wonder at that," said Mabella; "they ought to be happy; they have it so often in their power to amuse their relations and friends!"

"A song is very well sometimes, my dear Mabella!" said Mrs. Mary, "but it is not the bread and cheese, it is the mere flummery, and I freely confess, well as I like music, I have never wished one of my conversations with you to be interrupted by your warbling to me."

More discourse of this kind passed, and whether the Colonel was struck with the beauty or the conversation of Mabella, or the singularity of finding one girl in genteel society, who was not an artist, we know not; but so it was, that he attached himself to her during the whole morning, and when they returned to the house, he dragged Felix apart to ask questions about Mabella. "I admire *your* choice, my dear friend," said he, "and I doubt not that Cecilia is an angel! at least, so, I trust, she will prove to you; but, I confess, that I should prefer Miss Normanburn! not that I am going to do so foolish a thing as to fall seriously in love! no, I have made up my mind—I am now too old for that! it is inexcusable after five-and-twenty;—but I do admire the sweet simplicity of that animated wood-nymph."

"Miss Normanburn is an angel!" said Felix; "but, you, perhaps, do not know that she has no fortune!"

"Exactly so! angels never have!"

said the Colonel: "however, that is of no consequence to me; for I will not marry for love, as I have told you long since."

"I don't know that," said Felix, forcing a smile; "if you had made twenty vows, and broke them for Miss Normanburn, the world would, I believe, easily absolve you."

"Has she any flirtation at present?" asked the Colonel.

"I do not believe she even knows the meaning of the word! she is purity itself," said Felix.

"Have you known her long?" asked the Colonel, archly.

"N-n-o!—not very long," said Felix.

"Is she Lady Brushwood's visitor?" asked the Colonel.

"She is under my aunts' protection here," answered Felix; "they are now her father's guests, and the whole party is merely come to this fête."

"When are you to be married, Bonham?"

"On the 28th of next month, Milson."

"Umph!" said the Colonel.

The Illustrious Visitor, expected by Lord Brushwood, arrived about three hours later than the time fixed: no one, however, could be dissatisfied when they saw and heard him, and the whole party sat down to a superb entertainment, which, though served at nine o'clock in the evening, was called dinner; and Colonel Milson, who was well known to the great man, placed himself next to Mabella, and entertained her during dinner with many amusing anecdotes of the great world. So assiduous was he in his attentions, that all the young ladies were convinced Miss Normanburn had made a conquest; and Mrs. Bonham herself was not certain that it was not the case.

When the ladies were withdrawn, the gentlemen raillied the Colonel, and the —— said, smiling, that it must be bliss to wear such chains as Miss Normanburn's.

Felix tried to be pleased that his friend

was charmed; he tried to wish that he might charm Mabella; he tried to wish that she might accept his hand, when offered, but it would not do; he could not wish any of these things, and he was even ungenerous enough to feel, that he would rather Mabella should remain single, than become the wife of the first man in the world.

We are sorry to confess this; but such is the weakness of poor human nature!

By half past ten the whole of the grounds and house of Brushwood was illuminated, and filled with an immense concourse of people, among whom Mabella distinguished her old friends, the Chatterers, Captain Gander, and Snuffmore, but, as she sat by Mrs. Bonhams, they none of them approached her. There were many of the nobility present, and all the neighbouring gentry. The Illustrious opened the ball with the noble lady of the mansion, and Colonel Milson asked Mabella to dance. "Indeed, Sir,

to confess the truth, I cannot dance," said Mabella; "one of the mortifications of a want of accomplishments."

"The mortification, Madam, is the lot of those who might have been honoured with your hand," answered the Colonel; "but now I think of it, Mrs. Bonham, will it not be a want of due attention, if I do not lead forth Lady Pleasance to display her opera airs? Oh, here, Bonham, I see your Cecilia is dancing; pray sit down here, and do penance, now your goddess is absent, by keeping the seat for me." So saying, the Colonel went away to solicit the hand of one of the Lady Sniddy's, and Felix sat down between his aunt and Mabella.

"Milson is a happy man!" said he to his aunt; "he has an inexhaustible flow of spirits, and a heart at ease."

"How long do you expect it to remain so?" asked Mrs. Mary, in a whisper. To this her nephew gave no answer; he turned and looked on Mabella, who was

watching the dancers, and wilfully deaf to any conversation he might have with his aunt.

Never had Mabella appeared more lovely; she was elegantly and becomingly dressed, and the animation of the scene, and her own internal emotions, had given a brilliancy to her eyes, and her complexion, that rendered both perfectly dazzling. Miss Trehern, who now stood near them, left her place in the dance, and running up to Felix, laid her hand on his, and exclaimed, "'Tis beauty truly blent! whose red and white,"—but Felix looked sternly at her, and turning to his aunt, asked if she would not prefer walking through the apartments? She replied in the affirmative, and Felix gave her his arm; he was about to offer his other arm to Mabella, but she had glided round to Mrs. Mary's side; he was ungallant enough to make no remonstrance; and they proceeded to a music room, then quite unoccupied, where a current of fresh

air revived them, and at the extremity of which, beyond a superb conservatory, were assembled a number of the respectable farmers and villagers, to see the guests, and hear a concert intended to be performed.

"My dear Mabella," cried Mrs. Mary, as they walked up the room, "go round to the other side, and take my nephew's arm: you quite derange the order of things." Mabella obeyed, but she felt her hand tremble, as she placed it on his only half offered arm, and she fancied he trembled too. In this she was confirmed by his aunt asking him whether he felt chilly, to which he replied in the negative.

When they reached the extremity of the apartment, beyond which the country people were assembled, they stopped to admire some beautiful plants.; and they heard several voices without, asking, "Who is that? who is that sweet creature? what a bonny creature she is!"

One asked, "Is it Miss Moleson?" to which, another replied, "No, it's that angel, Miss Normanburn."

Mabella was hastening away, to avoid hearing what covered her with blushes, when a shrill scream, and a cry of "she's dead!" attracted her attention, and forgetting that there were plenty of people to assist the unfortunate woman who had fainted, probably from the pressure of the crowd, she darted from her companions, and ran to help the sufferer. "Bring her in, bring her in here!" cried she to two men who were raising her; and taking her lavender water from her pocket, she began to rub the poor woman's temples with it. Mr. Bonham and his aunt were by this time at her side; and, as the woman began to revive, Mrs. Bonham advised that, to avoid creating confusion, she should be taken out by the way she came, and consigned to the care of the servants.

The men were raising her to carry her out, when she opened her eyes, and fix-

ing them on Mabella, uttered a deep groan. "Poor thing!" said Mabella, "she looks very ill! could not she be put to bed? where is your pain, good woman?" The woman made no reply, but seizing Mabella's hand, she pressed it fervently to her lips, and to her heart, and then sighed deeply. "It is merely spasms, occasioned by the heat!" said Mrs. Mary, "and a little brandy will do her good; see, Mabella, my dear, there is a decanter there, I dare say it is spirits."

"What did your ladyship call her?" said the woman, in a voice hardly articulate. "Miss Mabella Normanburn," said Mrs. Mary. The woman then drank a small glass of brandy, and saying she was better, thanked the ladies for their kindness, and seeing people entering at the other extremity, she said to Mabella, "The Lord will reward you, sweet angel!" and immediately retired.

"I could fancy that that poor woman's

face was not unknown to me," said Mrs. Bonham, "but one always thinks so! did *you* ever see her before, Mabella?"

"No, Ma'am, never!" answered Mabella, "yet she seems to have known me!"

"There is something very impassioned and odd, about the woman," said Mr. Bonham; "is it possible that she could be an impostor? Did she want a present from the ——, and merely mistook the time?" "Hush, Felix! don't let us talk on the subject, as we had it to ourselves," said Mrs. Bonham; "it is very odd; and to-morrow I will make inquiries!"

The people who had entered from the house were those who superintended the apartments, and Mrs. Bonham and her companions leaving them returned to the ball room. They had been so long absent that the dance was over, and the company were taking refreshments in an adjoining apartment. They soon reached the spot where Colonel Milson and Lady

Pleasance were standing, the former, with great gallantry, holding a plate of strawberries, on which the latter was regaling. "This is a double one," said her Ladyship, taking one on her spoon: "I think I ought to give it to my cousin Cecilia! it is like a double heart!" "Does your Ladyship mean to imply that Miss Moleson's heart is *double?*" said Milson.

"Oh dear, yes, to be sure! she has her own and Mr. Bonham's too!"

"That is too cruel!" said the Colonel, with a sigh, "but it is always so with the ladies! they rob us poor wights of our hearts, and give us nothing but empty hopes in return! Ah! Bonham! you are there! I'm just lamenting the fate of the whole sex in yours."

"You are very charitably employed," answered Felix, "but really I do not consider my situation a pitiable one."

"Not exactly at this moment," answered Milson, glancing towards Mabella,

"but you have no heart, my good Sir! Lady Pleasance tells me you have not."

"I fear her Ladyship would not have charity enough to give me one, if I were to beg it!" said Felix. "No, indeed!" answered Lady Pleasance, "I hate you too much, you know, for taking our cousin from us." Felix bowed, and passed on to the table, where there was a variety of fruits and ices, and he asked Mabella what he should give her? She took an ice, and they remained standing some time in the same place.

It was not long before Mrs. Glassington and her partner made their appearance, and so exhilarated was the widow, and so certain that she had made a conquest of a jolly country squire, that she was guilty of infidelity to Mr Croker, and absolutely forgot him.

Miss Trehern, who seemed looking round for somebody, came up, leaning on the arm of Snuffmore; and Miss Rebecca

Chatterer on that of Captain Gander. Hurried on by the pressure, they could none of them stop to converse, and after seeing almost the whole party pass in review before them, our trio were gratified by the approach of the —— himself. He accosted Mr. Bonham very politely, said he had had the pleasure of seeing the Admiral not long since at B——, and that he hoped Mr. Bonham himself would one day favour him with a visit. "It is now some years since I was in this part of the country," said he, "and really, I began to fancy that the beauty of Yorkshire women was rather fictitious than real; but, I find I was mistaken! Greece itself could not present finer forms or more bewitching graces than I see to-night."

Most of the ladies looked gratified with this, and such as this; but Mabella was disgusted; she thought such expressions, accompanied with such looks,

insults. Felix observed her, and his feelings were too much in unison with hers, for him to withhold his approbation. He could not help, in his own mind, comparing her manners and habits of thinking with those of other young women; nor could he avoid wishing that Cecilia had more of that sterling good sense, and simplicity of heart, that Miss Normanburn invariably shewed. "But I am wrong to think about her at all," said he to himself; "I have avoided her, and I will avoid her: after her heroism in the wood, and the scene we went through together, she must, of course, consider me insensible and ungrateful, and, indeed, she shews it, by the coldness of her manner, and the evident dislike she has to be in my company—well, it is best so—so I would have her think!"

Such were some of the reflections of Mr. Bonham, as he once more led his aunt and Mabella to a seat, where they

were accosted by Mrs. Chatterer, who asked Mabella what she had done with her Harrogate beaux.

"Really, Madam, I had no Harrogate beaux," replied the blushing Mabella.

"Lord, child! don't tell such a fib," cried Mrs. Chatterer; "you know very well that Croker was dying for you; and old Barnacle tells me, that you were as fond of him!"

"*I?* I *fond* of any man? and of Mr. *Croker?*" said Mabella, weeping with vexation; "surely, Madam, Mr. Barnacle could not be so base as to say so! Mr. Croker has made my aunt an offer; but he never shewed me *any* attention."

"Great G—d of Heaven! made your *aunt* an offer, has he? then Barnacle was mistaken, that's all! Well, don't cry, my dear, you'll spoil your beauty! and Gander's here, you know!"

"Do you take Miss Normanburn for a goose, Madam?" said Mrs. Mary.

"Ha! ha! ha! very good! no, indeed!" said the Chatterer; "but I must tell you, angry as Gander was at her, he admires her prodigiously! but, perhaps, my dear, you've found your Man of the Woods, that your aunt swore you were in love with! it was not Lightfoot, was it?"

Poor Mabella was too much moved to answer; she hardly breathed; while Mr. Bonham, darting a look of rage at Mrs. Chatterer, started from his seat, and went to another part of the room. Mrs. Mary Bonham, who believed that the whole story was a mere invention of Mrs. Chatterer's, reproached her severely with her want of decency in addressing Miss Normanburn in this manner; and that good lady apologized, vowing that she was only plaguing Mabella a little, and did not mean to hurt her seriously. Mabella, however, was too seriously hurt to be able to remain in

the room : she begged Mrs. Mary to go with her to her own apartment for a short time, and that lady complying, we will follow them in the next chapter.

CHAP. II.

An honest Confession, that costs our Heroine some Pangs.—Plans for coming out.—Great Events in Agitation.

When Miss Normanburn and her friend reached their room, the poor girl indulged in a hearty cry, during which Mrs. Mary said nothing to her, wisely considering, that such emotions must have their way; when, however, she was once more composed, the prudent friend took her hand, and in a voice of great tenderness, said, "All that abominable woman said, my dear Mabella, however insulting and mortifying, could hardly, I think, justify your emotion, especially as you might perceive that neither my nephew nor myself believed a word of it; and you yourself explained the object of Mr. Croker's attentions.

But, my dear, I confess my curiosity is awakened: do tell me what she could allude to by Lightfoot, and the Man of the Wood?" Mabella was some minutes before she could resolve to answer Mrs. Mary; but, recollecting the way in which the story had been propagated at Harrogate, she determined to tell all the truth she could tell, and, with a faltering voice, she related the circumstance of her finding the stranger, saving his life, losing Molly's handkerchief, meeting him again, the thunder-storm, and their separation; her own subsequent illness; her aunt's belief that it was Mr. Lightfoot whose life she had saved; her imprudent disclosure of the story to the Chatterers, and her own pleasure in disoovering that Mr. Lightfoot was not the person; the sincerity of her manner, and artless simplicity of her narration, convinced Mrs. Mary that it was true: but Mabella betrayed symptoms of tenderness, that told her likewise the poor girl's heart was more

interested than it ought to be in the affair; and she longed to know whether chance had ever since presented this unknown to her view; and whether the attachment was mutual. Kissing her cheek, and thanking her for her confidence, she said, "And has chance never since presented this Knight of the Wood to your eyes, my dear child?"

"Yes, Madam, I *have* seen him again," answered Mabella, hiding her face on Mrs. Mary's shoulder.

"Well, my dear, honest child! and tell me truly, is he your lover?"

"No, Madam, he is not; he never can be my lover; it would be a crime to think him so!" said Mabella, in an almost inarticulate voice: then, raising her head, she added, "I will be very sincere, Madam; I was weak enough; to—to cherish a hope—but, it is crushed *for ever;* and my only consolation is, that he is *happily* another's. Do not ask me, Madam, *who* he is; *that,* after what

I have said, I will never tell: my only aim is to avoid and to forget him; but circumstances have made both almost impossible."

"You are mysterious, my dear child, while you are explicit," said Mrs. Mary; "I assure you, however, that your confidence shall not be betrayed, and that I will never ask you *who* was the stranger. At the same time, I cannot help advising you, if chance ever again throws you into his society, as I conjecture it must have done at Harrogate—mind, I am not asking—I should advise you not to seclude yourself from him, but, as it would seem that he never can be more than a stranger to you, to accustom yourself to meet him in company, as you do other strangers. This requires some strength of mind, but it is not above your powers; happily he is ignorant of your feelings, and by not running away from his presence, you will avoid any sudden emotion that an unexpected in-

terview, or a conversation, rendered interesting by novelty, might produce."

"Oh! Madam, but if he *should* by some of these people—if he *should* suspect!" cried Mabella—

"Then, my dear, depend upon it your avoiding him would confirm his suspicions. The only way to preserve your own secret, is to behave to him exactly as you do to other men. I have observed you to-night, my dear girl, I can tell you, and I have not seen a shadow of difference in your manner to the gallant Colonel, who is a most attentive dangler, and to my quiet Felix, who is, in truth, the married man: no, you were just what you ought to be to both, and what I hope to see you to all men, till some one, worthy of your virtuous affections, shall ask as he ought to do for them."

This approbation of her conduct reassured Mabella; she resolved to conduct herself as Mrs. Mary advised; and as

Mr. Bonham must have heard what Mrs. Chatterer said, to convince him by not shunning him, that her aunt had been mistaken. Her countenance recovered its serenity, and thanking Mrs. Mary for the interest she took in her, she begged that she might be allowed to be constantly with her during their stay at Brushwood. "I shall feel safe from all attacks, while I am under your wing, Ma'am," said she; "and I confess myself such a coward as to fear a Chatterer."

Before they returned to the company, they inquired about the poor woman who had fainted, and were told that she was gone home quite recovered. This was very satisfactory, and they once more returned to the dancing-room, where all seemed enjoying themselves, as much as mortals could do. Felix himself was dancing, and Mrs. Sarah assured them, as she made them room on the sofa, next herself, that he had been dancing during

the last hour. "I could not tell what had become of you both," said she; "I hope illness did not make you run away! I can tell you, Colonel Milson has inquired for you more than once, and I am much mistaken if he does not soon spy us out. Only think, Mary, of your making such a conquest at your age!"

"I beg, my dear, that you will not hurt my feelings by mentioning my *age*," said Mrs. Mary, gravely; "I am perfectly satisfied with my conquest, particularly as the Colonel is my nephew's intimate friend; he is worth securing."

As she concluded, she looked at Mabella, who, however, lost the hint, by not exactly hearing all that was said.

It now grew very late, and the supper-rooms being thrown open, the company adjourned there, and from thence to the music-room, where the Ladies Sniddy and Miss Moleson, and several other ladies and gentlemen, entertained the company with some enchanting mu-

sic and singing. Mabella still found the gallant Colonel at her side, and she observed, that while Miss Moleson was singing, he was watching Mr Bonham's countenance; a murmur of applause and delight ran through the room as Cecilia resigned her harp, and some of the gentlemen talked of her, and to her, in raptures, that perhaps were a little too warm, considering her engagements: however, they did not seem to raise corresponding raptures in her; for some reason or other, she looked discontented; and Mabella pitied her, as she ascribed it to the apparent apathy of Felix, who remained just within the conservatory, leaning against a pillar, and with his eyes fixed on a plant opposite him.

When the party found themselves sufficiently refreshed and rested, they repaired once more to the ball-room, where the morning sun had made the chandeliers hide their rays, and dancing being resumed, was continued by those who

remained so late, till six o'clock: as to our friends, they had retired to their rooms, and it was not till near two the following day that they ordered their breakfasts. Before the Mrs. Bonhams joined the family, they had a conference with their nephew, who attended them during the time they remained in the house, and to Mabella's great delight, behaved to her exactly as he had done before. Miss Molcson professed great pleasure in having met her, and hoped that they should see each other again in the race week at York; and Miss Trehern called her a sweet angelic creature, made for all the tender sensibilities of passion. As to Colonel Milson, he was politely assiduous in his attentions both to Mabella and the Mrs. Bonhams; but of Mrs. Glassington he seemed to have a horror. Drawing Mrs. Mary aside, under pretence of examining a portrait of Lady Brushwood, he asked, how long she remained in the country, and when

she returned to York? "At present, we propose staying with Mrs. Glassington only till Thursday next," answered Mrs. Mary: "we shall then return home, and if York is within your reach or your plan, be assured, Sir, that it will give us great pleasure to see you there: you will find that the old city is worth visiting."

"That I do not in the least doubt, Madam; and if it were not, I know some of its inhabitants are. I own I have been laying out for this very invitation, for I intend being at the Races; and as Bonham is to be married immediately after, I have made interest to be bridesman on the occasion. Miss Moleson graciously allows it, and I am engaged accordingly. Your niece is a lovely woman, Madam, and I should imagine, very amiable: her present situation gives an air of softness, at times, almost sadness, to her features, that is extremely interesting! nay, it has

changed even Bonham himself! I never saw a man more altered, or more *aged.*"

"I am sorry to hear you say so," said Mrs. Mary, "but it is but too natural! he has had a great deal of anxiety, and I confess I wish most heartily the wedding was over, that we might see him resume his wonted gaiety."

The Colonel smiled, and soon after, the carriage being at the door, the ladies took leave of their noble host and hostess, and Mr. Bonham led his aunts out; Lord Sniddy did that honour to Mrs. Glassington, and the Colonel attended Mabella.

"I need not ask you if you have enjoyed your visit, Miss Normanburn," said he, "for your countenance is a book where your thoughts are legible: it is downright cruel to look so contented, when you have spoiled the rest of half the men and women in the party."

Mabella only smiled; and, in reply, hoped that her absence would restore that repose her presence had destroyed.

"Ah! I see you are as void of pity as you are of malice, and envy, and all uncharitableness, Miss Normanburn," answered the Colonel; "but I heartily wish you that happiness you deserve! Bonham, won't you join in the wish?"

"Most heartily!" said Felix, bowing to Mabella; who, in her turn, bowing to each of the gentlemen, inwardly congratulated herself, that she was once more separated from Mr. Bonham.

"Well, upon the whole, we have had a tolerably satisfactory visit, I think," said Mrs. Sarah, as they left the house; "at least, we have attained *our* purpose by going; and I hope you, ladies, have been gratified."

This hope gave Mrs. Glassington an opportunity of enlarging upon all she had seen and heard, and saved her friends the trouble of talking during

their ride home; she then repeated the same to her brothers, then to Middlemist, and then to the Bleatheads; so that she might be said to have four times as much enjoyment of her visit, as any of her companions. The determination of Mrs. Bonhams, however, to return to York so early as the following Thursday, did not please her; especially as they gave no hint of asking her to accompany them; but she could not controul Fate, and she recollected that she had not yet settled Croker's affair: she resolved to keep it in suspense till she saw whether Mr. ——, or Mr. ——, would make her an offer; for, as she justly observed to Mrs. Bleathead, it was as well to have two or three strings to your bow.

Mabella, too, regretted the departure of her friends; she really began to feel a warm affection for them both, especially Mrs. Mary; and she could not suppress a tear, when the subject was mentioned. Mrs. Mary kissed her, and on the morn-

ing of Wednesday, taking her arm, she invited her to a walk in the garden with her.

"My dear Mabella," said she, "I have a sincere esteem for you, and I see it is returned on your part. I am going to ask you to oblige us, and—I am not prepared for a refusal. Know, then, that contrary to our hopes, neither Felix, nor Cecilia, will be with us at all; he will merely engage a lodging in York, where he will seldom be, as he will join Cecilia at the Park. In the race week, they will remain with the Brushwoods, and even on their wedding-day, I believe, they will only breakfast with us; we shall, in fact, see little or nothing of them. What we ask of you, my dear, is to go home with us to-morrow, and stay till after this wedding. Nay, do not interrupt me; my motive is not entirely selfish. I want you to *come out* at the races; and, in order to your doing

so properly, you must take a few lessons in dancing. I have consulted your papa and your uncle, and they warmly second my plan! Your aunt's consent will be easily obtained; and as you m.y constantly write home, my dear, you may animate the little circle, though absent from it. Well, now, what do you say? Will you kindly go to enliven the solitude of two disappointed aunts, or will you not?"

Mabella begged to have an hour to consider; and she went to her papa, to learn his pleasure. He said, he had promised that she should go, and stay as long as she liked, and she was her own mistress.

Mabella could not then refuse the invitation; satisfied that she should neither see Mr. Bonham nor Miss Moleson, but in public, her little heart was not insensible to the gratification of *coming out* in her own rank of life,

and under such chaperons as the Mrs. Bonhams: she ran to thank them, and to acquaint her aunt, who observed, that it would have been as proper, if Mrs. Bonhams had asked her too: but, however, it was all very well, and she was glad Mabella was not to be buried alive.

The two ladies then busied themselves in preparing Mabella's things for the visit; and Mrs. Bonhams, in some sort, reconciled the disappointed widow to them, by saying, that they hoped, next winter, to persuade her and her brothers to favour them with a visit at York.

They were exceedingly polite to Middlemist, and the Bleatheads, and told them, that whenever they came to York, they hoped for the pleasure of seeing them.

The evening was passed agreeably, if not gaily, and on Thursday Mabella

began her journey to York, not with perfect pleasure, for she knew the wedding of Mr. Bonham would be a trial to her, that would demand all her resolution; it was yet, however, at the distance of a whole month, and when once over, she was sure she should be happier.

Mabella had a sort of heroic resolution, that made her feel almost a pleasure in her trials; and she already anticipated a day when she should look back on them with satisfaction and self-gratulation. She travelled, then, not unpleasantly, to York, and viewed, with surprise, the venerable Minster, visible to her long before she reached its walls.

The evening of Thursday brought her to the comfortable residence of Mrs. Bonhams, where she was welcomed with a maternal embrace, and where she took possession of the room

intended for Miss Moleson; with what feelings, we leave the reader to guess, for Miss Normanburn never revealed them.

CHAP. III.

Preparations for a Race-Week at York, with Specimens of Love, Obedience, Politeness, &c.—A Public Appearance.

DURING the time that elapsed between Miss Normanburn's arrival at York and the race week, she saw Mr. Bonham but once; and that was only for five minutes: he had called three or four times on his aunts, but it was always at the hour during which she was engaged with her dancing master, from whom she had lessons twice a day. She had then nothing to fear for her feelings, they were not put to the test; and so agreeably did the time fly, that the Friday preceding that day, that was to bring the Brushwoods to York, arrived as if on a sudden. Mabella felt strong in her own resolution; she hoped this last trial would crown her with

honour, and she prepared to do credit to her friends by appearing in public, as they would wish her to do. They had liberally furnished her with every outward ornament her situation required, and they had taken care to introduce her to many agreeable families, where she was kindly received: Mrs. Bonhams had had one or two private dances to accustom her to the common forms used, and her master declared, that he should boast of his pupil as long as he continued a professor of the art.

On the Saturday, Mrs. Bonhams were busy in forming their arrangements for the week, and Mabella sat down to write to her aunt, and to give her an account of what was intended: the day passed over uninterrupted, except by the news Mrs. Stocking brought of what lodgings were let, and who had taken them, and who was come, and what the play was to be; and the ladies had already dined, when a knock at the door announced visitors, and

Miss Moleson and her cousin entered the room.

"Well, my dear Cecilia! this is as it should be!" cried Mrs. Sarah; "welcome! most welcome! and may this visit to York secure your happiness during the whole of your lives."

Miss Moleson could not reply; she embraced her aunts, and the tears chased each other down her cheeks: Mr. Bonham kissed his aunts' hands, and Mabella was almost choked with her emotion.

When the party was a little composed, Mabella was leaving the room, but Miss Moleson prevented her: "My dear Miss Normanburn, I assure you we have no secrets; and shall be glad of your society," said she: "every body knows I am to be married on Monday week, and all is prepared. I am glad you are to come out this year! the races will be very gay, and I hope the balls decent. Bonham here shall dance with you, when you make your debut, if you will give him leave."

Mabella knew not what to reply; but Mr. Bonham saved her the trouble of considering, for he immediately said, that he did not intend to dance with any body but Cecilia. "You must not be offended, Madam," said he, with a forced smile, "but as the laws of society will not allow me the pleasure of dancing with this lady, after she is my wife, I am resolved that I will have no other partner, while she is single."

Miss Moleson told him this was very foolish, and that she should not make any such ridiculous resolve; to which he replied, that she was at liberty to do as she pleased, but he should claim the same privilege.

Mrs. Bonhams had intended that Felix should dance with Mabella, and they were disappointed; but they were silent, and Miss Moleson began to inform them of what had passed at the Hall, after their departure; she mentioned Miss Trehern. Upon which Mrs. Sarah asked if she was

come. "Oh yes, aunt! and would have come with us here to-night, if Felix would have let her! she is gone to her lodgings. I declare, Felix, you seem quite to have taken a dislike to my Angelina! it is very unkind of you!"

"I am sorry," answered Mr. Bonham, "that you think so, Cecilia, but I have taken a dislike to her! I know not the being I *hate* so much! yes, I may say, hate, for it is stronger than dislike, as Miss Trehern." Miss Moleson looked very angry; but her aunt's presence prevented her from saying all she thought: turning to him, however, with a bitter smile, she said, "So, I suppose, you'll do to all those I love! you'll hate Miss Normanburn too, because I like her! well, *Sir*, you'll soon be at liberty to shew your likes and dislikes!"

Mr. Bonham was about to reply; but Mabella left the room, and not without the painful apprehension, that he would

be less happy in his union than she wished him.

On the following day, after church, she accompanied Mrs. Bonhams to call on the Brushwoods, and on her return home, found Colonel Milson's ticket on her table. "So then the Colonel is come, and I suppose we shall meet him at dinner to-night! I'm glad of it! I like the Colonel!" said Mrs. Mary; "don't you think him agreeable, Mabella?"

"Yes, tolerably agreeable!" answered Mabella, "but he rattles too much for me."

"Umph!" said Mrs. Mary to her sister.

But it is not our intention to give a minute detail of a race week at York, or to describe the amusements that Miss Normanburn enjoyed: suffice it, that she paid visits, and attended the course regularly in the morning, and that the evenings were divided between plays, balls, concerts, and private entertainments:

that Colonel Milson was ever at her side, as if studying her character, for he was no more particular in his manner to her than to other women; and that before the end of the week, Miss Normanburn was the great attraction. "Have you seen the beauty? the belle of the county?" was asked in every society; and as the carriages drove to Knavesmire, the company in the windows watched for that of Mrs. Bonham to get a peep at Miss Normanburn.

Sir Thistleton Hockham, finding that she was *the thing*, ever made one of her train, and she never appeared without a crowd of beaux.

The Mrs. Bonhams were, of course, delighted to see her so admired; but they were still more delighted to see her unspoiled by adulation, and in the midst of pleasure preserving her natural simplicity of manner, and equanimity of temper. Wherever she went, she met Angelo Lightfoot; but he avoided the party; and

as to Mr. Bonham, he hardly ever approached her.

The week passed rapidly away, and, on the Friday evening, Mabella, after staying a short time at the theatre, went with her friends to the assembly rooms. She was just standing up to dance with the young Lord M——, when she heard the Lady Sniddy cry out, "Lord, what wretches! do look at that creature in the feathers!" and turning towards the entrance, she saw Mrs. Bleathead, as fine as the milliner could make her, sailing up the room; and her lord and master, in a new powdered wig of twice the usual dimensions, following her. With perfect composure, Mrs. Bleathead seated herself on the first vacant seat, and looked round as if in search of somebody; which Mrs. Bonham perceiving, and knowing the sort of insult people sometimes met with, where there was no master of ceremonies to keep order, she good-naturedly accosted her, and learnt that Parson Bleat-

head, having business with the vicar, had determined to come to York, where he was sure to be found in the race week. "Aye!" cried the Parson, shaking his head, "he's too fond of harse flash! tes a pity, tes! for he's a vary exemplary man! vary, indeed!"

"So, as we was coming, Mrs. Bonham," continued Mrs. Bleathead, "nothing would serve Mr. Middlemist, but he must be third in a po-chay with us! I' sure! I was in a thousand quandaries as we spanked along! for I expected either a horse wou'd go mad, or a wheel come off, as we should be overturned, or have a peenomeena, or summut. or other! however, thank God, here we are! and so, as I'd time to dress, I thowt we'd come and see how Miss Normanburn footed it among t' quality."

Mrs. Bonham was infinitely amused with the Bleatheads, and Mabella really glad to see them; so that the good people passed their evening very pleasantly,

and as they were going back after break-fast the next day, she invited them and Middlemist to breakfast at her house.

The invitation was joyfully accepted, and Mrs. Bleathead amused the company with describing what she had bought, and where she had been that morning. "I thowt you would not be very early, ladies, so I set off a shopping and popping! I went down Whip-me-whap-me-gate, that is Cobler's Market, and there I popped Mrs. Waxface, the shoe-maker's lady, which has two young guests at Parson Bleathead's academy. Then I went into Pavement to t' linen draper's, and so through Mucky Peg Lane. I've bought the sweetest gownd! I went after through t' market, just to see how beef went, and called at a broker's in Peter Lane Little. However, I have not half done! for I must see Mrs. Cut-up, the dress-maker, and then down Little Ailse Lane. I want some cobbling cotton! my young ladies like fine works! they'll do a gownd in no

time!" So ran on Mrs. Bleathead, and she seemed herself as much amused as her hearers.

Middlemist, always taciturn, was particularly so that morning, and, as soon as breakfast was over, requested a private interview with the Mrs. Bonhams: this was, of course, granted, and Mrs. Bleathead was so curious to know on what subject they discoursed, that she wanted to persuade Mabella to listen at the door. Her curiosity, however, was not gratified: the interview ended, and, it being almost time to go to the course, the visitors took their leave, intending to see the race, as they went homewards, and Mabella drest herself for the business of the day. When she came down, habited in a hat and feathers, and an elegant thin pelise, she found Colonel Milson ready to attend her; he contemplated her for a moment, and then, in a graver tone than usual, congratulated her on having preserved her good looks, through the dissipations of the

week. "It is not the case with Miss Moleson," continued he, "I have seen her this morning, and she looks harassed to death! I really think she and Bonham look like any thing but happy lovers, and if such be the effects of the tender passion, I must pray for freedom."

Mabella could not reply to this half serious speech, and, Mrs. Bonham's coming in, she was not under the necessity of doing so: they got into the carriage and drove to the grand stand, where they found all the Brushwood party, but Cecilia. On inquiring for her, Felix said, that she was, he feared, far from well, but that she would not allow him to stay with her; "She sent for her Angelina," said he, "and where *she* comes, I have no desire to remain. I suppose she will be well enough to go to the play, and Lady B's party! at least, I hope so."

As they went home, Mrs. Bonham's called to see Cecilia, and they found her laid on a sofa, pale and languid, and Miss

Trehern sitting by her: they tried to persuade her to go home with them, as she would be much more quiet than at Lady Brushwood's; but she would not hear of it. "I'll come to-morrow night," said she; "to-day, Felix is settling all the horrid preliminaries, and getting what is necessary. I don't like to go out; my Angelina will stay with me now; and I shall hope *you*, my dear aunts, will receive me, *after I am married*."

"Why, my dear, you say that with as grave a face, as if you really thought there was any doubt on the subject," said Mrs. Mary: "you'll grow quite melancholy! really, Miss Trehern, this sentimentality has a bad effect." Miss Trehern looked offended, and the ladies took leave.

The following morning, Mrs. Bonhams sent to inquire how Cecilia was, when they learnt, to their great surprise, that she had risen early, and gone to spend the day, till dinner, with Miss Trehern: she intended to meet the Brushwoods at din-

ner, at Mrs. Bonhams'. This seemed very extraordinary, as Mr. Bonham had told her his determination not to visit her at Miss Trehern's: however, so it was! and Mrs. Bonhams, determined not to be out of humour, were ready to receive their company, with as much composure as they could assume.

CHAP. IV.

Hard Trials on both Sides.—Affairs draw towards a Crisis.—A Call to the Wedding.

The first visitor who arrived was Felix himself. He seemed much chagrined that Cecilia was not come; but, true to his resolution, he would not go for her. "Well," cried Mrs. Mary, "I must think you somewhat too determined, Felix! consider Cecilia's situation!" "I *do*, and I have considered!" answered Felix: "and be assured, my dear aunt, I have weighty reasons for not going to Miss Trehern's; Cecilia knows that I disapproved her going there." To this Mrs. Mary could make no reply; but she begged Mabella to go and hasten Cecilia's arrival; and poor Mabella, who looked on this as the last day of her trials, gladly complied. She returned, however, an unsuccessful ambassadress, as Cecilia said,

unless Felix came to fetch her, she would not stir. In this Miss Trehern supported her, and she begged Mabella to tell her aunts, 'that she would be with them by eleven o'clock, when she begged she might go immediately to her room.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of the whole company at this strange conduct of the bride elect; and Colonel Milson, who was of the party, as brideman, was exceedingly indignant. The day passed over in gloomy form; Mabella was even more composed than the rest of the party; and, after a long denial, at last, to oblige Mrs. Bonhams, consented to go with them to church the next morning. "Well," said the Colonel, "you have satisfied me, Miss Normanburn, that a lady *can* sometimes yield a hard contested point with grace! Bonham! why don't you thank this young lady for gracing your nuptials?" "I do," said Felix; "I rejoice that my aunts have one child, that will sacrifice her own wishes to

theirs! Miss Normanburn, you will be happy with them; you *deserve* to be happy." Poor Mabella did not venture to reply; she was rejoiced to have preserved Mr. Bonham's good opinion, and to be applauded for the constraint she must put on herself.

As the whole party was to meet at breakfast, on the morrow, at half past eight, previous to going to church, and as the ladies were weary with a week of dissipation, the Brushwoods and the gentlemen left the house before ten o'clock, and Mrs. Mary, ordering a chair, went herself to fetch Cecilia. She found her weeping violently, almost in hysterics; but resolved not to leave Miss Trehern, unless Felix fetched her himself. It was in vain that her aunt soothed her, blamed her, reasoned with her, entreated her! she remained obstinate, and at last Mrs. Bonham really thought that heated and agitated as she was, she had better stay all night with her friend: she brought

her then, by this concession on her part, to promise that she would come to her house in a chair before eight the following morning, along with Miss Trehern; and with this promise she took leave of her.

"God bless you, my dear Cecilia!" said she: "you are now on the eve of attaining the accomplishment of all your wishes, and with such a husband as Felix Bonham, you have almost a certainty of happiness! this, however, must depend on yourself in a great measure, and I think you love Felix well enough to make his wishes and his inclination th measure of your's. When you return from H——, where I suppose you will not stay longer than a month, come back to us: Miss Normanburn will, I hope, then be with us, and we may make a pleasant ramble somewhere together! God bless you aga n, my dear Cecilia! you have in part diminished our joy on this occasion, but I will not reproach you!" Cecilia threw

her arms round her aunt's neck; she sobbed as if her heart would break; then begging her love to her aunt Sarah, she wished Mrs. Mary good night; and that kind-hearted relative returned with a depression of spirits very unlike what she had hoped to feel on occasion of the marriage of the two children of her affection. She imparted to her sister and Mabella what had passed, and added, that there was a look of satisfied mischief about Miss Trehern, that convinced her that lady had encouraged Cecilia thus to disappoint her friends! however, she recollected what Felix had said, and felt pleased that her reign would so soon be over. Mrs. Sarah was very severe in her remarks; and Mabella retired to her room, to school herself to go through the business of the morning with composure. "It is but an hour's trial," said she, "and I shall have completed my task! Oh! had Mr. Bonham loved me, as he does Miss Moleson, how differently would I

have behaved! what pleasure can she take in contradicting him? but it is not her own pleasure; that Miss Trehern makes her so unaccommodating; that disagreeable Miss Trehern! Well! I'm glad to-morrow is the last day! I'm glad Mrs. Mary never knew that I loved Felix! perhaps if she had she would hardly have believed I could really conquer such an inclination; but I can, and to-morrow shall shew that I can! Never! no, I will never marry; that I am resolved! never! for I shall never again feel what I have once felt! but that is over! thank heaven, the struggle is over! To-morrow! would to-morrow were passed! and I am happy for life!"

Such were some of the reflections of the heroic Mabella, and they kept her awake till a late, or rather an early hour in the morning: at last, however, she fell asleep, and enjoyed such repose as the innocence of her heart and intentions deserved; and she did not awake till Mrs.

Mary herself came to call her the next morning. "Come, my dear Mabella!" cried the good lady, "get up with all speed! I never knew such a thing, as a woman asleep in a house at seven in the morning, when a wedding is to be performed! see, child, *I* am so young and so alert, that my bridal ornaments are already on, and if you are a good child, I'll adorn you."

Mabella hastened to rise, and, Mrs. Sarah coming in, the two sisters staid with her till she had finished her toilet: then each kissing her, they presented her with a pearl necklace and bracelets, which they put on, saying they hoped one day to adorn her, when she should give them bride cake in return.

"I can never give you more love in return, than I do now, my dear ladies," said she, "but I do not intend ever to marry!" At this her friends laughed, and hearing the arrival of visitors, they said they hoped it was Cecilia! "Run down,

my dear, and welcome her, and we will be with you in a moment," said they. Mabella obeyed; but, as it would not be decorous to welcome a bride at the end of a chapter, we shall defer our account of the wedding day, and what occurred on it, to our next.

CHAP. V.

In which we hope the Reader will deeply sympathize.

Glowing with youth, beauty, tenderness, and gratitude, Mabella opened the drawing room door, and ran forward to welcome Cecilia, when, to her great surprise, she perceived only Mr. Bonham; drest, it is true, in bridal attire, but with a fixed melancholy of countenance, that shocked her: she was so near him, that she almost ran against him, before she was aware of it, and so much off her guard, that she exclaimed, "Oh, heavens! you are ill!"

For the first time since that day when they separated in the wood, Mr. Bonham voluntarily took her hand, and pressing it respectfully to his lips, said in a melancholy tone, "No, Miss Normanburn, I am not ill, I am only anxious.

Fate, Madam, and your own heroic mind made you the preserver of my life; and I have often wished, since I knew *who* my preserver was,—I have often wished to thank you, as I ought. With a delicacy that does honour to your head and your heart, you have forborn for my sake to relate, that *I* was the object you preserved; believe me, I fully understand your generous motive; it doubtless was, that an incident, so interesting in itself, and the consequences—I hardly know what I would say—but I thank you that you have kept it from the view of those whose feelings it *might* have wounded. I thank you from my soul! I see I distress you; forgive and forget it; it is involuntary. I could not bear that you should part from me, and think me that insensible ingrate, I have appeared." It was now that Mabella had to put in practice the good resolutions she had formed; with an effort, that made her blood feel as if turned to ice, she checked the tears that

had unbidden found their way to her eyes, and said, in a steady voice, "If not speaking of the circumstance, Sir, has given you any satisfaction, I rejoice! my silence was very natural; it did not spring from any such consideration as you have hinted; it was merely because"—here Mabella stopped; she gasped, and tried to go on, but her nerves refused to second her. "Because what?" said Felix, looking astonished. "Because," said Mabella, who had by this time recovered herself, "I should never think of mentioning so common an act of humanity, or shocking your friends by letting them know the dangers you expose yourself to, in your country excursions."

When Mabella had pronounced these words, she sat down, not venturing to raise her eyes, lest the constraint she put upon herself should be visible; and Felix, his arms folded, still stood on the same spot, with his eyes steadily fixed on her varying complexion. They neither of

them spoke, and how long this silence might have continued, it is hard to guess; for it was interrupted by the entrance of the two aunts, with a large bride cake on a China dish. The two statues immediately recovered themselves, and Felix asked if Cecilia was not up yet. Mrs. Mary was at a loss, for she was loth to say that Cecilia did not sleep there, and yet it could not be avoided; so, to soften the intelligence, she said, that she herself had thought it better for Cecilia to remain at Miss Trehern's. "I wonder that she is not here," continued she; "indeed, when you came, I thought it was the bride; and I sent this blooming Grace down to welcome her. I'll send Robert with chairs for her and Miss Trehern." To this no answer was requisite, and Felix gave none; the man received his orders; the breakfast was prepared, and Mrs. Sarah desired Mabella to cut the cake for the family. "Come, my sweet girl! you shall cut the bride

cake at my nephew's wedding, and, perhaps, if he proves the kind husband I'm sure he will, you may admit him to assist at your's, one of these days!" said she, willing to enliven Bonham, who took no part in the conversation.

This, too, Mabella bore, and shed no tear; she found her trials sorer than she expected, but she had promised *herself*, and she would not fail a tittle. She began, then, to divide the cake, and Mrs. Sarah opened the bride's favours, that had come home the evening before from the milliner's. "See here, my dear, I shall put these pretty things in my drawer," said Mrs. Sarah, "and it shall be your office to give them out, as soon as we return from church. Do you hear, Queen Mab?"

"I do, and will attend!" said Mabella, steadily. And now there was another arrival; it could not be the bride and her attendants, as Robert had not had time to go and return; no, it was the

gay and gallant Colonel, who had no sooner paid his morning compliments, and shaken Felix by the hand, than he begged he might assist Miss Normanburn in her office.

"I don't know how it is," said he, "but certainly a wedding gives every body spirits!" Felix sighed. "Why, Bonham! if we could not account for that sigh by the delay of your lady love in descending, I should say, that it was meant as a decided *negative* to my assertion," cried the Colonel. Here Mabella sighed. "How now, my dear Miss Normanburn? what, another negative! I begin to fear, that I shall sigh myself, by and bye: are not *you* alarmed, ladies?" to the two sisters. "In truth, *I* am, and I own I begin to feel strange symptoms of sighing," said Mrs. Mary; "so, depend upon it, Colonel, your turn will be next! but here come the Brushwoods! how provoking that Cecilia should be so late! she calls this delicacy, I suppose."

Before the Earl and Countess entered, Mr. Bonham seized the Colonel's arm, and dragged him into another room; and, as Mrs. Mary heard the door shut, not long after, she hoped that Felix had himself gone to fetch the bride.

It was by this time half past eight o'clock, and the whole party grew impatient. 'Lady Brushwood was angry that Cecilia had left her house, and my Lord and his son were angry at being kept in York two days longer than they had wished; and the two young ladies were angry to see Mabella so beautiful, and so becomingly dressed; and the two good aunts were angry at this unnecessary pain inflicted on all.

At length, a footman's knock announced the arrival of the bride, and Felix, who had remained in the adjoining room, came in to be ready to receive her. He did not turn his eyes to Mabella; he bowed slightly to the last comers, and stood in the middle of the room prepared

to offer her his arm, as the door opened. There was a fearful pause—it seemed, that she came twice as slowly up stairs as usual; at last, however, the door opened, and in walked Colonel Milson. He was alone; he looked pale and terrified; he seized the hand of his friend, and bursting into tears said, "I can only hope, Bonham, that you did not *love* Miss Moleson."

"Good God! is she ill? is she dead?" cried all at once. "No, not dead, not dead," said the Colonel; "but, she has eloped; she is, by this time, fifty miles off!" Felix threw himself into a chair, and sat with an expression of incredulous wonder on his countenance, that gave Milson an idea that he would lose his senses; he tried to rouse him, while Lady Brushwood, weeping with vexation, asked with whom Cecilia had eloped?

"With Mr. Angelo Lightfoot;" answered the Colonel.

Mabella, shocked at seeing the two Mrs. Bonhams almost fainting, had been

supporting Mrs. Mary, and administering her salts to her and her sister; but she was now called to Lady Pleasance, who really fainted away. Mabella, however, would not stir; the housekeeper was summoned, and Felix, who had been relieved by a flood of tears, ran to his aunt Sarah, while the Colonel raised Lady Pleasance. Felix could not speak; his emotions, let them be what they would, were too great for utterance; he only pressed his aunt to his bosom, and wept over her. Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed before Lady Pleasance recovered, when the Countess begged the Colonel to assist her brother in leading her down stairs; she was put into the carriage, and the whole family followed, after bidding a slight adieu to the ladies of the house, who continued too much moved to be able to converse. After a short time, however, Mrs. Mary, raising her head from Mabella's shoulder, held out her hand to her sister, and said, "We had

better retire, my dear; great emotions require great strength; *this* sweet girl will not forsake us!" "Never," cried Mabella in an impassioned tone. "My oor Felix!" said Mrs. Mary: "we are ourselves too much grieved to comfort you; perhaps, your friend here will stay with you. Do not leave him, Colonel!—to-morrow we shall be able to thank you."

The Colonel promised to remain; and the housekeeper, and Mrs. Stocking supported their ladies out of the room. As Mabella was following them with the salts and hartshorn, she passed Felix, who caught her hand, and pressing it to his heart, said, "You are the preserver of the Bonhams, Mabella! God of his mercy bless you!" Mabella replied not; she was gone in an instant; but, as if there was magic in her eye, Felix felt revived, and thanking Milson for his care, begged to be left alone till evening. "I will then hear *all*," said he: "at present—I must

ponder—the affair is incredible, and I must have time to recover *the surprise*."

"Nay, my dear fellow, if the *surprise* was all you had to recover, I should have no fears for your senses," said the Colonel: but to own the truth, you bear the wreck of all your tender hopes with a calmness that shocks me! I would rather hear you rave a little. I cannot leave you, Bonham."

To this Felix replied not; he covered his face with his hand; and, after a considerable pause, said, "I am most concerned for my aunts! cruel Cecilia! she has planted daggers in bosoms, that—but it is past! and I will not reproach her!"

"Oh! as to your aunts, *they* will soon be better!" said Milson. "I will engage, that they will be regulated by you; if they see you not quite heart-broken, they will forget their grief in the joy of preserving your peace! Besides, they have that pitying angel with them! how she wept over them! To this Felix gave no answer; he threw himself on the sofa, and

sighed bitterly. The kind hearted Milson with the greatest patience sat a full half-hour silent, hoping that, exhausted by his emotions, Bonham would sink into a slumber, and during this interval, he was considering what would be the best course for his friend to pursue. In all mental maladies, he had heard, that travelling was a specific, and as he was quite disengaged, he determined that Felix should in a day or two set off with him on a tour to the Highlands: he sketched out their route, and resolved, in the course of the day, to write to a friend of his in Northumberland, to tell him that they would pay him a visit of three or four days duration on their way. In this he was interrupted by Mrs. Stocking, who came to ask how Mr. Bonham was? and say, that Doctor Lax was in the house, and had seen her ladies, and they hoped that Mr. Bonham would see the Doctor, and lose a little blood. This roused Felix, and, rising from the sofa,

he said, if it would not distress his aunts, he should wish to see them; but he himself was not ill.

"Not ill!" exclaimed both his auditors at once; at the same time opposing his leaving the room.

"Really," cried Felix, half angry, "one would suppose, Milson, that you thought me light headed, by the way you treat me in! I assure you that the shock has done its worst with me, and that I want nothing but *time* and *reflection*, to restore me quite."

This was pronounced so sanely, that the Colonel did not think proper to oppose any further: he felt astonished, that after a two year's courtship, his friend should bear the loss of a wife, and at such a critical moment too, as he did bear it! but recollecting that there were daily instances of people, who had lived thirty, forty, nay fifty years together, shewing equal fortitude, he ceased to wonder; and leaving word that he would return in an

hour, he went to his lodgings to give orders for his journey. Fully persuaded that Bonham would be glad to leave a spot, where he had been so cruelly disappointed, the Colonel made no doubt of his ready acquiescence in what he intended to propose; and he exerted himself to settle his bills, and put all in train for the morrow; and in this charitable design we must leave him, and attend our hero to the apartment of his aunt.

He found Mrs. Sarah lying upon the bed, and her sister sitting by her in an easy chair: at no great distance, was Miss Normanburn looking all alarm, and anxiety, and at the foot of the bed stood Doctor Lax. Felix drew a chair to the bed side, and taking a hand of each of his aunts, he pressed them to his lips: the good ladies wept plentifully, and Mabella having quitted the room, the Doctor thought proper to do the same, after urging Mr. Bonham in vain to be bled. As soon as they were alone, Felix said,

"Thank God, my dearest aunts, that you are no worse! the cruel Cecilia! but we will not reproach her! what misery would she have saved you, me, and herself, if she had honourably declared her intention!"

"Mention not honour and her together!" answered Mrs. Mary: "her mind must be corrupted! she, who at one time seemed only to live for you and happiness! but, my dear Felix! let her unworthiness serve to reconcile you to this severe dispensation, and bless God, that she was not already your wife! no baseness is too great for her! had she died worthy, I could have borne it better!" Felix again pressed his aunts' hands to his lips: he could not speak. "It is a great consolation that you bear it so well, my dear Felix," said Mrs. Sarah; "but I fear this calm is deceitful, and that you will feel it more a month hence. Let me beg you to take all precautions! don't be alone; Colonel Milson will stay with you;

you must not think on what that disgraceful girl might have been to you; you must only remember what she *is*." "As I know," said Felix, "that your tranquillity will in some measure depend on mine, you may rely upon it, that independent of *self*, I shall try to be tranquil: that I am shocked, grieved, nay, disappointed, I confess; but, I have long since discovered, my dear aunts, that Cecilia would not make me happy."

"Not make you happy, Felix? why then did you persist in marrying her?" exclaimed Mrs. Mary.

"Because I believed that her happiness depended upon mine. I saw in her disposition and inclinations many things that displeased me; but I had given my word, and, in truth, I always considered, that in such engagements, *that word*, once given, is sacred. It is so, in other things; it ought to be in all."

The Mrs. Bonhams looked on each other with an astonishment it is impos-

sible to describe: they gradually ceased to wonder that their nephew was not heart-broken, and experienced all the consolation he wished them from this seasonable confidence.

He continued, "Never, to the best of my knowledge, did Cecilia perceive, that she had sunk in my opinion; it is true I remonstrated with her on her extravagant partiality for that iniquitous Miss Trehern, who has been, I am persuaded, the main spring of this preposterous, and ill-starred union; but I remonstrated as a friend or a brother would do, not as an imperious lover or husband! No, my dear aunts! within the last hour, I have reviewed my whole conduct to Cecilia, and I stand acquitted by my conscience of any, even unintentional offence towards her: *she* began, and *she* has terminated our connexion, and I have the consolation of reflecting that I, throughout its course, acted, as I would do again in the same circumstances."

Mr. Bonham had judged rightly, that the knowledge of the actual state of his mind would do more towards tranquillizing his aunts, than any thing else; and aided by their resentment against Cecilia, it had so good an effect, that they became curious to know, and able to bear the knowledge, of the particulars of her flight. This was, however, impossible, till the return of Colonel Milson, which was not till near five o'clock. The ladies rose to receive him; and to his great surprise, as well as that of Miss Normanburn, the whole party met calmly in the drawing room, and requested that he would relate all he knew. The Colonel perceiving how much the invalids were improved during his absence, did not hesitate to comply, and he said what may be found in the next chapter.

CHAP. VI.

Gleams of Joy through Tears.—The Colonel finds that it is unwise to plan for others.—A longest Day in August.—Wise Resolves, and an interesting Morrow.—New Discoveries.

"DURING my absence, ladies, I confess, my own curiosity has led me to be particular in my inquiries respecting Miss Moleson's movements; and, in order to be as accurate as possible, I went to the fountain head. I called on Miss Trehern."

"And did she dare to see you, Colonel?" asked M s. Mary.

"You shall hear, Madam. I found her weeping on her couch, from which she rose to welcome me. 'Alas! Colonel Milson, I was too ill to see you in the morning; I was, in truth, insensible, when you were here!' said she; 'but I

am now a little recovered, and very solicitous, as you are the friend of that dear injured Bonham, to have Cecilia's cruel conduct set in its true light. Oh! she has behaved cruelly to me; to her second self! her Angelina! I, who lived only for her! to involve *me* in the censure her conduct will give birth to.' I confess, this exordium had not, by any means, the effect the lady seemed to expect on me; but I thought it best to let her give her intelligence her own way.—'Then, Madam, you were not Miss Moleson's confidante and adviser,' said I.

" '*I?* *I* her adviser? What, could a friend's heart have counselled the beloved of her bosom to change Light for Darkness? to cast away perfection, and clasp pollution, Colonel Milson?'—Nay, my dear Bonham, don't look so incredulous! upon my honour, those were, to the best of my remembrance, the lady's very words.

" 'And pray, Madam, when did Miss Moleson take wing?' said I.

" 'Last night. I left her soon after Mrs. Bonham, and inquired what the bustle I heard below was. My maid said, it was Mrs. Bonham's man for Miss Moleson's packages, and I reposed in quiet—but it was the cruel Cecilia herself, Colonel! she walked from the house, and got into a postchaise in the Minster Yard, as I have heard since!—Oh! I shall never recover it!'

" 'And did she leave no letter behind her, to apologize for fleeing at such a moment, Madam?'

" 'Yes; she left this note for me: you may take it, and shew it to dear Bonham! and this packet I have just found in the glass drawer,' answered the Angelina: " and, as she gave me leave, I have brought both."

The Colonel being desired to read the note, he instantly complied.

" *To Miss Trehern.*

" Farewell, my Angelina! Contrary to your advice, I decide for Mr. Lightfoot, and before this reaches your hands, I shall, I hope, be many miles distant with the man of my choice. I would beg you not to blame me, but I know your opinion of Felix Bonham too well, to hope that you will refrain. May you be able to pour the balm of consolation into his heart!

" C. M."

" P. S. We are going to town, where we shall be immediately married at Angelo's parish church."

" That is a vile forgery!" exclaimed Felix; " fallen as Cecilia is, she never wrote, she could not write so determined a falsehood as that letter contains! Miss Trehern, I doubt not, knew all that was

intended. Hence the visit to Brushwood; hence all I have suffered!"

"Well, so it may be; for the ladies are certainly very ingenious, when they have certain points in contemplation," said the Colonel; "but here is the other letter, addressed to yourself."

Felix took the letter, and after casting his eye over it, gave it to his friend to read. It was as follows:

"*To F. Bonham, Esq.*

"By this time—by the time you read this, Felix, you will know that, as my heart was not entirely your's, I could not consent to give you my hand. I free you, then, from all engagement, in a way that I know will bring blame upon me from you, as well as my aunts; and, if there had been any other way, I would not have gone to these extremities: but, though I am of age, I know obstacles

would have been thrown in my way, by the prejudices of my aunts, that my worn down health and spirits would not have been able to contend with. I once thought I loved you, but I was mistaken; I never felt for you what I have done for Mr. Lightfoot: nobody then can blame me for the thing itself, only for the manner of it. I have but one serious regret; it is the assurance of your great tenderness for me! but time will wear that off— or rather, I hope, you will transfer it to one who has too long felt for you, what fidelity to me has made her try to hide. Cast away your prejudices, Felix, and let Angelina console you. I rely on your generosity to procure me remission from my aunts; as well as from Lady Brushwood and my cousin Pleasance. I dare not write to any of them, at present. When we come down to Normanburn, it shall not be my fault, if we are not all friends

again. Depend upon it, Angelina is not to blame.

"Your still affectionate Cousin,

"C. M."

Sunday evening.

For some time the company was, as it were, struck dumb with this most extraordinary letter; but Mrs. Mary soon recovered her speech, and indignantly declared, that it had done her good; it had cured her of all pity or regret for Cecilia; her double treason to her cousin Pleasance, who, it seemed, was attached to Lightfoot, and to Felix, and her cold cutting "when we come down to Normanburn," which she knew would sorely wound all present, had severed her for ever from her heart.

"I hope I shall never see the unworthy creature again!" continued she; "at least, she may assure herself that at Normanburn I will never see her! there is

but *one* I could clasp to my breast as mistress of Normanburn; yes, my Mabella, it is yourself! you and Felix are henceforward the children of my affection; and I hope that when you know each other's virtues, you will feel a truly fraternal value for each other."

This was too much for Mabella, who had been so many hours, nay days, weeks, and months, acting under the greatest restraint; she rose to approach Mrs. Bonham, but her knees sunk under her, and she fell, before Felix could catch her. He, however, instantly raised her; he supported and embraced her, but sufficiently master of his emotions to recollect his situation, and who was present, he said nothing; and the window being thrown open, he carried her to the fresh air, and she soon revived. The two aunts, apparently as anxious as Felix himself, forgot their weakness, and stood over her; while the Colonel, remaining in his chair with the letter in his hand,

contemplated the scene with a sort of tragi comic aspect. He, however, made no observation; and Miss Normanburn being soon restored to life, and resigned by her happy supporter, and dinner being announced, the whole party adjourned, with surprizing tranquillity, to the dining-room, and even ate their dinners better than they expected. Mabella performed the worst in that way; but the Colonel congratulated her on being able to eat at all, after a week's dissipation, and preparations for a wedding: "to say nothing," added he, "of your natural anxiety for your friends, and the forming new relationships. I wish to God, my dear Madam, you would admit me into the league! I am, as you know, an old friend of your new brother, and, I dare say, if he will recommend me, you will not reject my suit!"

"I think, Sir, you had better let Mr. Bonham try how he likes me for a sister,

before you prefer your suit," said Mabella.

"Why, yes, Madam, now you mention it," said the Colonel, gravely, "I think that will be a prudent precaution; and, to own the truth, I beg, however, you will not think I mean to say any thing unpolite; I really do not think that Bonham *will* like you for a sister."

"I am sorry, Sir," said Mabella, in a piqued tone, "I am sorry, Sir, that Mr. Bonham's friend should have formed an unfavourable opinion of me!" and, at the same time, a tear stole gently down her cheek.

The Colonel was exceedingly hurt at perceiving that what he had said had given pain; and the silence of the Bonhams convinced him that they were not pleased with him: at the same time, he could not, without offence, explain, even to Felix, when alone, his meaning, and he thought it best to let the cloud pass unnoticed.

The ladies retired, as soon as dinner was over, and left the two friends together; when the Colonel immediately proposed his travelling plan to his companion, and begged him to agree to it. "By staying here with your relations, every object will renew your grief, and by softening your mind, at present but too susceptible, Bonham, retard your return to peace and happiness," said he. "Let us take a stroll through the Highlands this autumn. I have some Scotch friends, who will be glad to see us; and I own I myself feel the necessity of changing the air."

"It is a very pretty plan, and, at another time, I should be glad to pursue it," said Felix; "but, at present, I cannot leave my aunts."

"Why, they will not be alone; won't Miss Normanburn stay with them?"

"I hope so," said Felix.

"Well, really, then, I don't see what occasion there can be for you to retard

your own return to peace by neglecting this pleasant ramble," said Milson, very seriously; "your widowed heart will not enliven your aunts, or that sweet sensitive plant, Miss Normanburn, who, not knowing me, takes all I say seriously."

"There is a time for all things, my dear Milson," answered Felix; "and the matter was, I suppose, Miss Normanburn thought your jest ill-timed: when she has learned to know, and value you, as I do, she will feel as you wish her."

"To tell you the truth, Bonham," said the Colonel, "I was beginning to fancy, last Saturday, that it was worth while to try to make the sweet girl feel as I wish her, or rather as I might wish her; but now I give up the point! your affair has cured me of the inclination, and I'll never put my happiness in a woman's keeping."

A gleam of joy, as if a care was removed from his heart, illumined Bonham's countenance, but he made no reply; on perceiving which, the malicious Colonel went on.

"You are well off, my good friend, let me tell you, that you are once more free; and when time shall a little have healed the wound, you'll think so. To be sure, if any thing on earth could make one bear the chains of matrimony without wincing, it would be such an angel as this lovely Mabella; and there is no knowing a man's destiny, till he tries. Heigho! I believe there's magic in her name. Ma-bella—or *my beauty!* well! after all, I shall, one of these days, be intreating you, in your new relationship of brother, to get me leave to sigh my soul away at the feet of Mabella!"

Felix rose, and said, gravely, that in his present situation his nerves would not bear conversation. "Excuse me, Mil-

son," said he, "but your superabundant spirits distress me. You'll find books in that room; I will meet you in the drawing-room, when tea is ready."

He looked so very wretched, that the Colonel's heart smote him for having indulged in ill-timed levity; and, taking a book, he lay down on the sofa, and did not move till the servant called him to tea. When he entered the drawing-room, he found Felix already there, and he mentioned to his aunts the proposal he had been making to him, and asked what their opinion was.

"It is, that our dear nephew should do exactly what is most agreeable to his present state of mind," said Mrs. Sarah, "without considering us. We are sure that the society of one he has so long esteemed as Colonel Milson, would be most salutary to him; and, if he feels himself inclined to travel, nothing could be more happy than your friendly plan."

"There, Bonham! you hear your aunt's opinion," said the Colonel; "shall I countermand the horses, or will you fix the hour for their being here?"

"Countermand them, if you please," said Felix.

"Well! and what am I to do with myself, then? will you invite me to stay at York?"

"Yes," said Felix.

"But can I be of any use to you?"

"Your company and conversation will be of the greatest use to us all."

The two old ladies assuring the Colonel that they very much wished his stay, he said he would remain another week, and, as the family were harassed, all retired early, and the Colonel returned to his lodgings, and, at the desire of Felix, wrote an explanatory letter to the Admiral.

It appeared to Mabella, when she was once more shut up alone in her

room, that this had been the longest day she had ever passed in her life, and, perhaps, for her, one of the most eventful. In it she had first been assured of Bonham's grateful sensibility; of his approval of her conduct: in it she had seen him almost another's, and delivered, as it were, miraculously from his engagement; and in it she had been claimed as the child of his aunts, and the sister of Felix. Emotions, too violent for her frame, had, however, almost betrayed her secret; she bade herself remember that though Felix was free, he had a widowed heart, still filled with love for another; and conscious that now the idea of crime was removed, her love for him was more likely to be reviving, she made a thousand good and wholesome resolutions, not, perhaps, in her situation, easy to keep.

"After the treachery he has suffered from Cecilia, it is very unlikely that he should ever love again," said she; "nay,

the very mention of Miss Trehern in Cecilia's letter, threw him quite into an agony: no, he will most likely hate all the sex too much, ever to think of a wife; he will live single with his aunts, as I will with my papa; and I will think of him as a dear friend and brother; but never shall he know the weakness I once was guilty of."

Then the poor girl's imagination formed many pretty plans for visits at Purlbeck, in summer, and at York, in winter; and she could not help pitying Cecilia, who, residing so near as Normanburn, would be excluded from such society.—"But *she* never loved Mr. Bonham, I'm sure," said she; "I know she never did! I thought she could not, when she contradicted him so at Harrogate!"

On the following morning, the Mrs. Bonhams, who had received a more severe shock than they were aware of at the time, took their breakfasts in bed, and Mabella and Felix sat down to the

social meal alone. Just the idea, that Mabella supposed would occur to him, did occur. "Had I married yesterday, so I should have sat down with Cecilia."

But strange as his sensations were, they were not of the nature Mabella supposed; they, however, made him appear absent and inattentive; and after Mabella had sent out his aunts' breakfasts, she placed his cup before him, without his perceiving it. He sat a considerable time, as if buried in thought; then, looking up suddenly at Mabella, he said, "I am lost, Miss Normanburn; the strangeness of my situation amazes me! What an age of anxiety and alarm has passed, since I had the happiness to meet you in the wood, and yet it is but about twelve months!"

"Very little more, Sir," said Mabella.

"Perhaps, Madam, you might think my behaviour then—odd—I hardly know

what it was! but I know that that interview will never be erased from my memory." Mabella felt the officious tears trembling on the brink of her eye: on the foregoing day, when he had spoken on the subject, she had been able to repress her tears, but now it was impossible; they flowed freely down her cheeks. Anxious to conceal them, she turned her head away, and wiped her face with her handkerchief. Felix was too much occupied with his own sensations to observe her's, and he again resumed the discourse.

"Many circumstances that have occurred since that time, and have rendered the interval one of misery, I may say, I was blind enough to repine at; but they were all for the best! and I trust that a brighter fortune awaits me, than I could ever have enjoyed with my cousin." Good Heavens! thought Mabella to herself, what is he going to say? and he remaining silent, she thought she was expected to answer—she therefore said, "I'm sure,

I hope so, Mr. Bonham!" Mabella's voice, in pronouncing these words, the real wish of her heart, was so very tender, that for a moment Felix felt as if he could clasp her to his bosom: but he suppressed his transport—a sort of idea that a widower of a day, would commit an indecorum, by shewing how early he could transfer his affections; a well-founded fear that he should disgust Mabella, kept him silent! he only sighed.

"I'm afraid your tea will be cold, Mr. Bonham! shall I put in the sugar for you?" asked Mabella, half forcing a smile, as if to raise his spirits. "If you please," said Felix, holding the cup, and admiring the beautiful hand that was helping him: still he held it, as if for more; but, at last, Mabella stopped, and said, "How much do you like to have? I have put in four! will that do?"

"Exactly," said he, setting down the cup. "You have forgotten the cream,

Mr. Bonham," cried Mabella; I know you like cream! I think it is well for my dear Mrs. Bonhams that they do not see how much *worse* you are this morning, than you were yesterday!"

"Oh no! I'm not worse, my dear Miss Normanburn! far from it—I'm better, and my kind aunts have nothing to fear for me, on account of the transactions of yesterday. That I shall ever be as happy as they in their tenderness wish me, is, perhaps, impossible! but I think Fate cannot again render me so wretched as I was yesterday."

Again there was a pause, for Mabella felt somehow surprised at the manner in which he spoke, and at his free mention of his cruel disappointment yesterday. She, however, had nothing to say in reply, and she handed him the bread and butter. "No, thank you!" said he, taking the plate from her, and offering it in his turn, "I *cannot* eat—but I hope *you* can, my

sweet preserver!" Mabella took a piece, though she knew that she could not swallow it; she laid it on her plate, and cut it in two. This Felix observed, and said, "It is wrong and unjust in me, dear Madam, to draw so largely on the compassionate tenderness of your disposition, and to inflict pain on one to whom I wish only joy and peace: your anxiety for my aunts, Miss Normanburn, was too much for you yesterday; and I foresee that if I indulge in talking of mournful subjects, I shall very unintentionally injure you! forgive my egotism; perhaps, situated as I am, it is impossible not to be an egotist." "It is very natural to talk of what one feels deeply; and I assure you that any pain the subject inflicts is more than counterbalanced by the pleasure of seeing all my friends relieved," answered Mabella. Felix did not say, but he looked the tenderest reply to this, and again the breakfast was neglected, and he sat and contemplated his companion. During the

year that had intervened between the time when Felix first saw Mabella, and the present moment, she had considerably improved, both in face and form; but, as he had never permitted himself to examine her, to do more than glance at her, when they met, he had not perceived to what extent. He now fancied that it was the first time he had seen any alteration, and lost in wonder and pleasure, he was unconscious of the lapse of time, or of the confusion his steady gaze produced; when the entrance of Colonel Milson recalled his wandering senses. Mabella took the opportunity of retiring, begging that Mr. Bonham would ring the bell, when he had done with the breakfast things; and, curtseying distantly to the Colonel, she left the room. "It is between one and two," said the Colonel, taking out his watch.—"How are you to-day, Bonham? You look better than you did yesterday, I can tell you—how are the good ladies, and that blooming sylph?" Mr. Bonham

replied laconically to these questions, and the Colonel beginning to relate some of the sporting anecdotes of Saturday, we shall leave the two friends, and rest our pen.

END OF BOOK VIII.

BOOK IX.



CHAP. I.

A real Friend.—Hints on Kittens, with dangerous Leisure.—A Secret, or the History of a Heart.

COLONEL Milson remained a week at York, and during that week he had the pleasure of seeing his friends tolerably well recovered from the first effects of the blow Miss Moleson's conduct had struck at their peace; of seeing that, unless Mabella's affections were otherwise engaged, Mr. Bonham would probably secure them to himself; and of learning through the medium of the London papers, that Mr. Lightfoot and Miss Moleson were married at St. James's church. All hopes of

making Bonham his companion were now at an end; for he spent the whole day with his aunts and Mabella, and the Colonel would not indulge his own inclination to a flirtation with Miss Normanburn at his friend's expense; besides, he really esteemed her, and he feared, that if he staid he might be drawn in to marry an angel without a fortune. These good and weighty reasons, then, determined him to pursue his original plan, and on the morning of Wednesday he came to take leave of the family.

"You are very good, Madam," said he in return to Mrs. Mary's regrets for losing his society, "and I can assure you that mine are still greater for the loss of your's. But, to own the truth, if I stay much longer, you will not get rid of me at all; for the air of this house seizes me in a way I am not used to. I am most happy to see that Bonham has improved, and is improving in health and spirits, every hour. I don't understand these cases,

never having been so unfortunately engaged, as my friend—but that it is all eventually for the best, I doubt not."

"I hope so!" said Mrs. Sarah, with a sigh; "but this has been a severe trial to us all! Do you know that Miss Trehern yesterday made another attempt to have an interview with us, and when that would not succeed, she wrote to Felix—he returned her letter unopened."

"And served the lady quite right," returned the Colonel—"though, upon second thoughts, I should have been curious to know what she could say. Well, Ladies! I shall probably be in York again before I go to Bath! and it will delight me to find you all restored to peace and tranquillity. May not I say adieu to your amiable guest? is she visible to-day?" "Oh yes! she is one of Simplicity's daughters, always at home, and visible," said Mrs. Mary. "I sent her to walk in the garden, for the dear girl is moped to death! I suppose Felix is with

her, and, if you please, we'll join them there." To this the Colonel assented, and taking a lady on each arm, he sallied forth into the garden, where he found Mabella with one hand through the arm of his friend, while with the other she was moving a cork at the end of a string, which cork was followed by an active kitten, whose gambols seemed to give herself and her companion great pleasure.

" It is a pity to interrupt so pleasant a sport," said Mrs. Mary, " but the Colonel *will* forsake us, and he is actually come to take leave."

" I'm very sorry," said Mabella, " down kitty! keep down!" The Colonel smiled archly at Felix, and said, " I am gratified by Miss Normanburn's *regret*, and very proud shall I be to be remembered by her."

" Oh indeed, Sir, I shall not forget you, or the many pleasant hours we have past in your society," answered Mabella; " and, if I should be forgetful, Mr. Bon-

ham will remind me, for he talks to me a great deal about you!" The Colonel shook her hand, and that of his friend, and said, he should soon return to see whether the kitten was under good discipline. He then wished the ladies good morning, and after retiring with Felix for about half an hour, he left the house.

As Mrs. Bonhams did not yet admit any visitors, the departure of the Colonel left Felix the sole companion of Mabella, at those hours when his aunts were not present: these were not a few in the day, for the ladies' health had been so much injured, and their mortification on Miss Moleson's account kept them so continually irritable, that they never rose to breakfast, and they always retired between dinner and tea. It was these precious hours, then, that Felix employed, not in making love to Mabella, but in endearing himself to her; and, at his aunt's request, he read with her every morning, and improved her taste by lite-

rary discussions. He taught her too to draw an oak, and she proved a tolerably apt scholar, though why Felix should confine her to the oak, when many other objects would have been so much easier, Mrs. Bonhams could not tell: they were no artists themselves, and they supposed it was the best and properest way. As to Mabella, she now feared no discovery of her secret, with regard to Mr. Bonham, for she had become familiarized to his countenance, and the tone of his voice; and, as he had never after that first morning renewed any thing like serious conversation about her, she remained satisfied, that he would never love any body after Cecilia, and that she might, if she lived single, continue to enjoy his fraternal regard. In this state of happy seclusion, they reached the end of October, when a letter from Mrs. Glassington informed Mabella, that her uncle was far from well, and that, if her friends were tolerably recovered, and

could spare her, her presence would be particularly desirable at home. Felix was sitting by Mabella at breakfast, when she read the letter; he saw the tears flow down her cheeks, and he feared to inquire what had happened: with all the frankness of friendship she gave it him to read, and said, "I'm sure, my dear Mrs. Bonhams will be of my opinion, that I ought to go home, as speedily as possible, for my dear friends have nobody to wait on them, or to comfort them: Mrs. Bonhams have plenty of attendants—and I shall leave *you* with them." To Mabella's surprise, her companion gave her no immediate reply; he turned the letter about on every side, as if he expected to find something else, though, in fact, he was not thinking of it. "Is there any thing I've missed?" asked Mabella. "Yes, I see something here at the last corner! what is it?" It was only, "Mr. and Mrs. Angelo are *to Christmas* at Normanburn." Mabella, shocked at her

own indiscretion, took the letter, and said, "Indeed, Mr. Bonham, I am sorry to have been so thoughtless as to hurt your feelings by letting you see *that*—but I was not thinking."

"Set your heart at rest, my dear Miss Normanburn, about my feelings on the subject of Cecilia, now and ever," replied Felix in a composed voice; "I aſsure you that I look upon my deliverance from that ill-starred engagement with joy and gratitude; and, if I were to meet Cecilia to-morrow, it would be with no other sentiment but pity for the fate she has brought upon herself. Let us send away the breakfast things, if you have done; and, as my aunts are not, and will not be stirring, during the next hour; if you have patience to hear me, I will satisfy the wonder that sparkles in your eyes, and give you a *history of my heart.*" He then rung the bell, and as soon as the man had removed the things, and mended the fire, Felix wheeled round a couch,

and taking Mabella's passive hand, placed her by him on the seat: he did not then resign her hand, but, pressing it to his lips, said, "You must have patience with me, dear Mabella, and promise not to run away from me—nay! why so alarmed? let me retain your hand—am I not your brother?"

"Oh no! nonsense," said Mabella—"*this* was not what you promised: I must go, indeed, if you are so—unlike yourself."

"Well, then, stay, and I will be like myself," said the delighted Felix. "I only give you notice, that if you run away before my history is completed, I will pursue."

"Well, well! make haste, then!" said Mabella, looking at her aunt's letter. "When I first saw Miss Moleson, that is, after we were mere children," said Felix, "I had never felt sufficient esteem, or love, if you please, for any woman, to wish to make her my wife; nor did I feel

this when I met *her*. I found her amiable, and accomplished, but I admired her only as a brother may a sister. I may, indeed, venture to assert, that I never should have thought otherwise of her, had not my aunt Mary, who doated on Cecilia, hinted to me, that Cecilia distinguished me by a preference of a tenderer kind, and that, if my affections were disengaged, I should render our family union still stronger by giving them to her. I will not trouble you with minutiæ, my dear Miss Normanburn; suffice it to say, that after seeing the gay and the beautiful, wherever they were to be seen, I found none preferable to Cecilia, and, though I had none of that passion, she seemed to feel for me, I was prepared to make her an affectionate husband. I left her here, and went into Devonshire to settle some preliminaries with my father. I was disappointed—and I found, that owing to some awkward circumstances, it would not be in my power to marry Cecilia at

the time fixed. Feeling for her situation, and my dear aunt's regret, I resolved to impart this myself, and not by letter, and I was on my way to York, when, attracted by the beauty of the scenery, I strolled with my sketch-book to Pike Wood. There might have ended my adventures, had not you saved me—nay, let me kiss the dear hand, raised in my defence—you shall not fly, I declare, Miss Normanburn; I returned the second day to sketch a spot where I had met an angel—and, do not be displeased, Mabella—I felt, while I held you in my arms, that there were ties, dearer than those that drew me to my cousin. I loved you, dear Mabella—yes, from the first moment I saw you, and I will to the last of my existence." Mabella tried to rise —but it would not do—she could not stand; she tried to speak, but her tongue was motionless; she laid her head on the arm of the couch, and Felix, almost too happy to proceed, from witnessing her

emotion, went on: "My heart was no longer my own, but my engagements were sacred, and the conflict that ensued cost me a severe illness. I wrote to York, and, as soon as I was well enough, with a heart all your own, but a faith that was another's, I exerted myself to bring the affair to a conclusion, and pressed my cousin to fix an early day. I had resolved never to see you again, and, as Cecilia knew not my mental wandering, so I determined she should have no reason to suspect it. She refused to marry in London—happily for me! and I came down to meet her at Harrogate; when in the grounds of S— I found *you*, Mabella. Alas! you know not the agony that moment was to me! to find in the Miss Normanburn, whose praises I had listened to, that very angelic being, whose image I had in vain been striving to banish! I did all I could—I avoided you—behaved ungratefully, coldly to you—I would not trust myself to be with you,

and when at W—— you were faint with the motion of the carriage—I was in a little better state from my mental sufferings. Guess what I have suffered since, at Brushwood, and here—recollect what passed on the morning of my intended marriage, and you will see in it a confirmation of all I have said. My great consolation is, that no coldness on my part betrayed the feelings of my bosom, and Cecilia left me, fully persuaded of my devotion to her. And now, my dear Mabella, let me confess, that, but for the recent circumstance, I should have told you this on the first morning we breakfasted together; but you would not then have listened to me, and the necessity of a separation has induced me now to precipitate my declaration, before I have, I fear, had time to create such an interest in your breast, as may secure me a favourable hearing: all I now ask, sweet girl, is permission to court your affections—nay, answer me, Mabella! I will not

leave you, till I know whether you are decidedly adverse to me or not."

"Indeed!" said Mabella, who had by this time recovered her presence of mind, "indeed, Mr. Bonham, you must end this subject. I am so young and inexperienced, that I know not what it is proper to say; the confidence you have reposed in me, raises you in my estimation; but I must go—indeed I must, I beg you not to detain me."

"Well, my Mabella, I will not detain you five minutes—grant me but five minutes! do you remember the picture at Brushwood?" "Oh yes! I remember it too well!" said Mabella. The pleasure with which this reply inspired Mr. Bonham was visible in his countenance; and had Mabella had courage to raise her eyes, she would have seen plainly the saucy hopes it gave her lover; but she dared not look up; and Felix, pitying her distress, rose, and said he would now leave

her. "Oh yes! pray leave me, pray do!" said Mabella.

"No—it is utterly impossible, while you use that same supplication that parted us the first evening we met!" said Felix: "you told me, then, you were the Queen of the Fairies, and I did homage accordingly. Oh! I shall never forget it! never! Then, the handkerchief! you called it a *keepsake*, Mabella; how many conjectures that handkerchief cost me—had you not looked so really distressed, I should have been able to present it to you now."

"For which act of gallantry poor Molly would have been lamenting all this time!" said Mabella. "I remember how generously you restored it, and how grateful I felt!" "And do you not remember, too, that I told you, you should live in my memory for ever, Mabella?" said Felix: "No! I cannot leave you—I'll wait till my aunts come! But tell me, Mabella, was not your head hurt by that

fall? I have often feared since, that your health suffered; but I never could trust myself to ask."

"Yes! I had a bad fever—my *head* suffered a good deal!" answered the blushing Mabella. "In *that*, then, we sympathized at least," said Felix. "I feared it would be so! Which of these dear hands was it I let fall that last evening with a pang, I can feel, even now? Nay, you must indulge me now, my Mabella; you shall not refuse me! I resigned you then—but I'll never, no, never, resign you again." "You promised to leave me," said Mabella, half angry—"pray do, Mr. Bonham; indeed, this is very improper! you behaved better in the wood, you kept your word there."

"And I'll keep it here, my Mabella," said Felix, hearing his aunt's bell ring: "I am gone!" so saying, he left the room, and Mabella, glad to be alone, wept with joy, quite as violently as she had ever done with grief. She, how-

ever, retreated to her own room to recover her serenity, and wash away the traces of tears; and we shall now retreat to our's, it being too late to begin a new chapter.

CHAP. II.

How to help Friends in Distress, and assist a Confession.—The Consequences of running away.

NEW ideas, hopes, and sensations, like new shoes, require a little time and wearing, to make them sit easy; and Miss Normanburn found this to be the case, after her conversation with Mr. Bonham. It seemed incredible to her, that he should have actually loved her so long, and so tenderly; that he should tell her so, and wish to have her for a wife! her own self—a poor, portionless, unaccomplished girl, with nothing but an honest heart and a pretty face to recommend her. And then it occurred to her, that, probably, though his aunts were very kind to her, they might not approve having her really for a niece, the wife of their dear nephew; and that, if they did

not, this love that she valued so much would occasion her the loss of friends, whom she loved, with all her heart. This was exceedingly distressing, so that with the pleasing, and the unpleasing, and the consciousness that she had something to conceal, and the unwillingness to meet Mrs. Mary's quickly penetrating eye, and the difficulty of knowing how to relate what had passed, poor Mabella, like most timid people, doubled her difficulties, and staid up stairs in her own room, full an hour after the usual time of visiting her friends, though, to own the truth, of this last circumstance she was not aware.

When she entered the sitting-room, she was surprised, on looking at the time-piece, to observe how late it was, and she made her morning compliments and inquiries with a countenance and a voice but too expressive of constraint. Her friends, however, took no immediate notice of it, she sat down to her work, and

in her anxiety to appear easy, she entirely forgot her aunt's letter. In about a quarter of an hour, Mrs. Sarah said to her sister, "I fancy Felix is writing his letter," at the same time looking Mabella full in the face. "Bless me! *I* have a letter too!" cried Mabella. "I had really quite forgotten, my dear Mrs. Bonham! but I have a letter from my aunt; how could I be so absent! my uncle is ill, and my papa wishes for me at home, Ma'am! and if you will give me leave, I must, I believe, deprive myself of the pleasure of staying longer, as I had hoped to do." As Mabella ceased speaking, she presented her aunt's letter to Mrs. Bonhams, and tears ran down her cheeks. Mrs. Bonham read the letter, and said, "I hope, my love, your uncle is not very ill, but I quite think with you, that you ought to return home, and not deprive your friends of the happiness your sweet cares must bestow, wherever you are. I need not tell you how we shall *all*

regret the separation; but duty is imperious, and we must be contented. Nay, my dear girl! don't give way to this infectious tenderness! depend upon it, we will soon meet again! Why, bless me, child! you look so oddly, so unlike yourself! what *theft* have you been committing? I expect to hear of something very direful, for you look as if you resolved on a full and free confession!"

This Mabella had resolved on, but she had not courage to speak, and Mrs. Mary went on:

"When people are in distress, I like to impart pleasant news; and, as news of a lover can never be unpleasant, I'll cheer your little heart, my dear, by telling you that I have had a sort of a—what shall I call it?—an interest made, for my interest with Miss Normanburn."

Poor Mabella trembled, she was hot and cold, red and white, by turns, yet she had a look of satisfaction, and her malicious tormentor went on: "While you

continued shut up in your own room this morning, my dear, I suppose, pondering over your aunt's letter—but I don't inquire—a gentleman paid us a visit." Mabella started—then it could not be Felix—and she seemed ready to sink from her chair. Mrs. Sarah would have spoken, but her sister motioned her to be quiet, and said, "Before I go on, tell me honestly, my dear, what opinion you have formed of Colonel Milson." "Colonel Milson!" repeated Mabella, faintly. "Yes, my dear, Colonel Milson! Should you like him for a husband?"

"*Him* for a husband?" sighed Mabella. "Yes, my dear! a well-connected, well-born, opulent, handsome, intelligent man; those are only a part of his perfections! but, taking him all in all, and supposing a great deal of love and esteem, and all that sort of thing, should you like to be Mrs. Milson?"

"No, Ma'am, indeed I should not!" said Mabella.

"Well, really, that is very extraordinary, all things considered!" said Mrs. Mary; "half the young ladies in the county have been ready to fight for him! he's quite *the man!* won't you consider again, before you answer, my dear?"

"I have no occasion to consider, dear Mrs. Mary, I am quite *sure!*" said Mabella, now a little more composed.

"If you allowed me to join my sister in the confidence you reposed in me," said Mrs. Mary, "I would ask—but, do you allow it?" "Whatever I say to one of you ladies is intended to both," said Mabella. "After that handsome speech, it is unfair to torment you, dear girl! but, tell me, then, was the Colonel, or was he *not*, the wild man of the woods?" "He was not," said Mabella; still unable to be as explicit as she wished.

"And tell me, my dear, does your preference for that wonder, dropped from the stars, form the obstacle to?—you know what I would say, Mabella!"

Miss Normanburn was silent, for her secret seemed too mighty to be uttered; and the merciless Mrs. Mary went on: "Well, then, I am to understand, that it *does*; so, to the left about, good Colonel! I have done with you; and, I suppose, Mabella, if *my nephew* was to sue for your good graces, this same *unknown* would send him after his friend?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabella, starting up, and clasping her hands in the most impassioned manner, "It was he himself! indeed it was—but I could not tell you so!"

"Now," said Mrs. Mary, catching her in her arms, "I have done plaguing you, my dear! I know how you have been longing these two hours to utter that confession, and the Colonel was a happy feint to assist you." And now a scene of tenderness, most delightful to all parties, took place; and Mabella was assured, that if her papa gave his consent to her union with Mr. Bonham, she would be warmly

welcomed as the beloved wife of his choice, and the chosen child of his aunts; and, in order to ascertain her fate as early as possible, Mrs. Bonham proposed that her sister, her nephew, and herself, should take Mabella home, on the following day but one; and that she (Mabella) should write to that purport to her aunt that very evening, and desire her to provide lodgings for them, either at Mr. Bleathead's, or Jobson Simpson's. "But," continued she, "with true old-maidish spite, I must plague Felix a little, lest he should be too happy! the young man has been very explicit with us; but though with a sufficient portion of vanity in his composition, he has some doubts and misgivings about your permitting him *to hope*, that's all he aims at at present; he would not presume on more, you know, till Mr. Normanburn's approbation is obtained, and in order to keep him modest, I told him that I had very strong reason to suspect your affections were already engaged."

"Oh heavens! surely you did not!" cried Mabella.

"Yes, surely I did!" answered Mrs. Mary; "recollect, my dear, you declared you would never tell, who the man of the wood was; and though my nephew told us all that story, and all his saucy hopes, I was not obliged to tell him—all I knew. I have puzzled him, and I still leave you to keep your own secret, as a prudent maiden ought to do." Mabella promised to do her best, but begged that she might not be left alone with Mr. Bonham. "Oh! as to that, my dear, you must take your chance, and provide for your own safety!" said Mrs. Mary; "*we* shall do just as usual, and there would be no merit in keeping the secret, if you are never tempted to tell it." Miss Normanburn was about to say something in reply to this, when Felix came in with a letter in his hand, which he desired his aunts to read, and while they were doing so, he conversed with Mabella on indifferent to-

pics, or rather we ought to say, talked to her, for she hardly ventured to give him an answer. "It will do very well," said Mrs. Sarah, "but you must allow me to add a postscript; there is time enough before evening: if you are not busy we will all walk in the garden before dinner." The whole party then adjourned to the garden, and then to dinner, and Mabella's thoughts, during the latter ceremony, were almost solely employed on the means of escaping the usual tête-à-tête after it. Her friends, nay Felix himself, saw how she was occupied, and determined not to distress her; he looked forward to breakfast on the morrow, when she could not escape him.

Felix feared no opposition from Mr. Normanburn, or his father, and his conversation with his aunts had been so satisfactory to him, that all he had now to wish, was to ascertain whether Mabella really felt any other tenderness for him than what gratitude inspired; and her

present alarm, and difference of look and manner, made him almost certain, that upon reflection she would not refuse him. He was not surprised, then, when after dinner, instead of going to the drawing-room, after she had conducted Mrs. Bonhams to their apartments, as usual, she went to her chamber, and did not come down to tea, till she had ascertained, that the two ladies were risen. The urn was boiling on the table, and Mrs. Mary exclaimed, "Come, my dear, I was just going to beg Felix to make tea! why how very unneighbourly you are! what have you been doing up stairs?" "I have been writing to my aunt, Ma'am," said Mabella: at the same time filling the tea-pot. "I should think, my love, you had been writing a sermon, or one of Lady Corillia's death-doing stories, by the time you have staid," continued Mrs. Mary; "have you been without fire?"

"I believe so," answered the blushing Mabella, ready to cry for vexation. "Be-

lieve so, my dear! well, if you should have another letter to write to-morrow, I beg you'll order the housemaid to light your fire: the evenings are cold now."

Felix would have interfered, but his aunt made signs to him to be quiet; and though he was uneasy to see Mabella uneasy, he would not disappoint his tormenting ally. "Come, my dear," said Mrs. Mary, after a pause, "we shall be obliged to you for some tea." Upon this Mabella poured out the tea, and sweetened it, and put in the cream; and reached a cup to each individual: Felix tasted his, and set it down on the table, hardly able to keep his countenance: his aunts did the same, and, after some ineffectual struggles to be grave, they both burst into a violent fit of laughter. Mabella, astonished, and afraid, exclaimed, "Bless me, what have I done!" and Felix, who could bear it no longer, said, "My dear Mabella, nothing at all! my aunt is in spirits to-night, and she is amused with your

having forgotten to put the *tea in the pot!* that's all. Give me leave to assist you! I don't wonder, after the alarm you have had about your uncle, that your nerves are shaken." Very grateful to be thus relieved, Mabella suffered Felix to make tea, and apologized for the mistake she had made. "Your apology, my dear little Mabel, is all very pretty," said Mrs. Mary, taking her hand, "but I won't allow you to make it under false colours! *you know* very well, and that young man *guesses*,—I see by the sparkling of his eye, he guesses,—that *he* had more to do with saving *our* nerves, and shocking *yours*, than the news about the Captain. Why, my dear, he has actually told us." "Oh, Madam, have pity upon me!" said Mabella. "So I will, if you will pay me the pity again!" said Mrs. Mary. "Most willingly," answered Mabella.

"Then, Felix, I'll give you an order on my banker; you shall receive it for me," said Mrs. Mary.

Felix again interfered, he took Ma-

bella's hand, and pressing it between his own, he said, he hoped Miss Normanburn would not again think him so troublesome a companion, as to avoid him. "I know I was very importunate in the morning," continued he, "and I acknowledge that I left you, to tell my whole secret to my aunts. We are no strangers to each other, Mabella, and, in order to do away any painful repetition of what has passed just now, I venture to ask you in the presence of these generous and affectionate relatives, whether I may be allowed to accompany you to Purlbeck, or not? or if you would be happier, or easier at my following you?"

"No, she would not," said Mrs. Mary; "she would rather you should go with her, if it's only to save us from the Luddites! would you not, my Mabella?" "Indeed I would!" said Mabella. "Well!" cried Mrs. Sarah, "after that generous avowal, which has, I see, filled my nephew, as it ought, with grateful

joy, our Mabella ought to be free from further persecution. My dear girl, should you hereafter honour Felix with your love, and your papa permit us to hope that we may make a Bonham of you, be assured, that *we* shall heartily bless the day that introduced us to you! I have no objection to your tears, when they are not painful ones, my sweet girl, but I think my sister has been a little hard upon you. As she and I, however, have business to arrange in the next room, we will leave you and Felix to seal your letters, and send them to the post, and I hope when we return, it will not be long first, we shall find you as happy and composed as you deserve to be."

The ladies then sent out the tea things, and followed, themselves, and no sooner was Felix alone with Mabella, than he thanked her again and again for the *hope* she had given him: vowed that the happiness of his future life depended on securing her affection, and that when once

his doubts on that head were removed, he should have little more to wish. "I know not, my Mabella, what my aunt Mary meant by a half serious assertion she made to-day," said he, in a hesitating voice;—"Don't ask, pray!" interrupted Mabella, in great alarm.—"Not ask, my sweet girl? after that prohibition it is impossible to forbear: what was it? tell me, my sweet prisoner, what was it you confided to her?"——"Nothing in the world that you don't know," said Mabella. "I told her, where I first met *you*." Felix was satisfied; nay he was more than satisfied! but he restrained his transports, and leaving his artless companion in the belief that she had preserved her secret, at least, that he could only distantly surmise it, he soon soothed her into composure, and when the old ladies returned, they were received with smiles that gladdened their hearts.

CHAP. III.

In which the Reader will find an interesting Anecdote of Dr. Drain, as well as some of our Heroine, which we hope will set her Character in an amiable Light.—Kisses.

It was the office of Mrs. Fendwell, Mrs. Mary's maid, to go to Miss Normanburn's room to take her candle and receive any orders the young lady might have to give, after she had finished in her mistresses' room; and on this evening she was exceedingly astonished on entering, to find Miss Normanburn seated in a chair, with her head supported by her clasped hands, and her unsnuffed candle burning to waste on the dressing-table.

"Lord ha' mercy, Miss! why, whatever is the matter wi' you?" cried the waiting gentlewoman, as Mabella started up; "surely you must be very ill to let

your candle go on i' this way! do but see how it's all swealing doon! what muck and to do it is making! are you poorly, Miss Mabella?"

"No! thank you, Mrs. Fendwell! I am very well!" answered Mabella: "but I was thinking, and I forgot the candle!"

"Why, noo, that's odd enough, Miss, and makes me think some bad news is come to t' gentlefolks i' t' family," said Mrs. Fendwell, unbuttoning Miss Normanburn's frock, "for I just stepped doon stairs to give Jemmy a message, and he says he went into t' drawing-room to see 'at fire was oot, and take t' candles, and Mr. Felix, instead of being gone to bed, as he has every night since his misfortune, poor dear creature, all by his self! was sitting there wi' his poor arms folded, and his heyes—he has the beautifullest heyes, enough to set any lady's heart a bumping! if ladies had any hearts—his heyes was watching t' coals, i' t' grange!"

"Is it late then, Mrs. Fendwell?" said Mabella, willing to stop the good woman in the course she was pursuing. "Yes, Miss, it's almost an hoor since you came up stairs. I hope, Miss, you've had no bad news, as makes you so uncomfortable?" said the curious Fendwell.—"Thank you," answered Mabella, "but I am not uncomfortable." This answer by no means pleased Fendwell, who saw there was something in agitation, and had in vain been trying to learn what it was from her mistress: she was silent a few seconds, and then renewed her attack.

"What a mercy it is, Miss, that Miss Cecilia's falsity took no more hold o' my poor dear ladies, than it did; they're a vast deal mended this last day or two, which Doctor Lax describes to his own physicking; but to my mind there's summut more nor that! To be sure, Dr. Lax is a very powerful man, and has more custom than all t' doctors has, and he keeps 'em going; if any man can fetch

oot a illness, he can! but my lady does not take half his descriptions! she thinks she knows best what suits herself, and, to be sure, she has a hunderstanding aboon most folks! and to-night she's all brisk, and as well! aye I should not wonder, if she was to get up to breakfast to-morrow!"

"I'm glad to hear it! I hope she will," said Mabella, sighing softly.

"Oh, ho!" thought Mrs. Fendwell, "there the shoe pinches, does it! then, I suppose, Mr. Felix begins to look sweet upon you, Miss; aye! aye! I smelt a rat;" but not satisfied with thinking, she said, "I'm thinking, Miss, what a mercy it is that you was here to comfort my ladies and Mr. Felix after his misfortunes, poor dear man! well, to be sure, to be crossed in love is the sorest of evils, and the worst to be borned, and nobody can tell how we all pitied him, poor thing, that night as was to have been his wedding night, when he went up to his lone-

some bed, all so sad, and nought but his cold pillow to hug! but, to be sure, t' weather was warm! that was one good thing!"

Mabella could not help smiling at this ludicrous speech, and Mrs. Fendwell, encouraged by what she thought approbation, went on.

"We all of us thought, Miss, what a pity it was Mr. Felix would not be bled that day, for bleeding is a hexcellent thing in them love cases, and if Dr. Drain had been called in, I wand him, he'd a cooled him nicely! Pray, Miss, didn't you see the Doctor at Harrogate?" "Yes, he was there, when we were!" answered Mabella. "Aye, so I remember Mrs. Patch, Mrs. Chatterer's woman, told me, Miss. Why, do you know a great misfortune has come to Dr. Drain; he was took afore my Lord Mayor this very day, and they say sich an exposing there was of him! but, what is worse, Miss, he's forced to pay too!" "What had he done?"

asked Mabella. "Why, Miss, you know how curious he is in bleeding, and they say never man was more expert wi' t' lance. There's Jenny Sapskin, her father works doon at Robinson's tan-pits there, she went to live wi' t' Doctor, two year ago, come Martlemass, it is not long now first! and a fine rosy-cheeked lass she was, when she went to t' Doctor's, and she has niver, no niver been able to get a ha'penny oot of him, for wages, sin the day she entered his sarvice, so this very day she brought him up afore t' Mayor to summons him for her wages; and what do you think he did? why, again her wages, they was not much to him, to be sure! he sets up a bill for bleedings; I think they say above five hundred bleedings: and there she could not deny the truth: so my Lord Mayor said, 'Why, young woman,' says he, 'this is a heavy bill upon you, and you must know, as if it be true, or if it be not true! if as it's a true bill, you must be satisfied to

reckon yourself paid.' Then poor Jenny Sapskin began to blubber, and cry, and she says, says she, 'My Lord,' says she, 'I ha' nowt to say again t' bleedings, for it is very sartain there is not a vein in my body as master have not a tried, and slashed over and over!' 'Aye!' cried Dr. Drain, rubbing his hands, 'that's true.' 'Well, but,' says Jenny, 'you know, you do, master, that I niver gived my dissent to no such thing, and that you did it i' spite o' me, and that you've almost killed me, you have! I have not a pint o' blood left to bless myself with, and if as my Lord here does the thing as is right, he'll make you pay me for my precious blood, he will! and to convince his Lordship, and the court, I'll shew 'em how you have a scarred me all over!' and then, Miss, what do you think poor Jenny, poor lass, did? why she whipped off her bed-gown, and her stays, and doon wi' her petticoats, and a fine sight there was to be sure!"

"Bless me, how shocking!" cried

Mabella; "it is a shame to hear of such indecency! I hope the Lord Mayor stopped her, and sent her out."

"Why, Miss, I can't say how that was," answered Mrs. Fendwell, "but they say there was some jesting, and sniffling at it, and poor Jenny stood there, just as you do now, Miss! well, to be sure, though she did not look half so handsome wi' her poor scarred skin, and her chemy was not so long as your night chemy, Miss; but, however, she got her wages! lucky for her! and the Doctor's bill was not allowed."

"I'm rejoiced to hear it!" said Mabella, stepping into bed, and stumbling as she did so.

"Oh Lord, Miss!" cried Fendwell, grinning, "that is a sure sign of a wedding! either a wedding, or a journey, however, it is, Miss, and I hope, not the latter."

"Perhaps it may come true, Mrs. Fendwell, for once," said Mabella, "for I am

going to Purlbeck the day after to-morrow."

"Going, Miss?" cried Fendwell, holding the bed clothes suspended in her hand, "going to leave my ladies? Law! what a pity, Miss! and my mistress niver told me, neither! and what will poor Mr. Felix do for a companion? Well, Miss! I can only say that I am truly sorry to see my wishes crossed, and to hear that you are going now, when we have no parties nor visitings! the house will be so dull without you, Miss! and unless my ladies mends their manners, I can't guess what poor Mr. Felix will do for a play-fellow! I sure, for the last two months, he have had nobody to comfort him for his loss, but you, Miss, and we have all said, over and over, that, but for you, he'd a been but a saddish sort of a spectacle! Well, I wonder my lady should be in such spirits, now you're going! but, there's so many wonders now, nothing's wonderful! as I said about

Miss Cecilia, says I, after she could leave such a handsome, well-built man, as Mr. Felix, as had courted her two years, and take to such a little wizened-looking hop o' my thumb gentleman as Mr. Lightfoot, after that, says I, I'll never wonder at nothing no more!" The loquacious Fendwell then inquired, whether she could do any thing else for Miss Normanburn, and wishing her good-night, retired to the party below stairs, perfectly satisfied, that she now understood all the affairs of the family: as she told her companions, she was convinced that Mr. Felix was amorous, and Miss Normanburn unwilling; and that the old ladies were rejoiced to send her out of the way: and with some right and reason too, for, as Miss Normanburn was poor, and had nothing but blood and beauty, it could not be expected his aunts could wish Mr. Felix to fall seriously in love with her.

After an excellent night's repose, Ma-

bella arose in the morning fresh and blooming as Hebe, and unwilling to repeat the folly of seeming to avoid Felix, with whom, in fact, she delighted to remain, she went down to breakfast at the usual time, and found her happy companion already waiting for her. "I need not ask how you have rested, my dear Mabella," said he, kissing her hand; "you look this morning, as I would ever have you look; and I trust in Heaven that I shall be enabled to make your future life as happy as you last night rendered mine. After twelve months of suffering to be thus blest in your smiles, is to be almost too happy! Shall I make tea this morning, or will you?"

Mabella, recollecting her mistake of last night, could not forbear smiling, and at the same time complaining of Mrs. Mary's attack upon her; and Felix defended his aunt by saying, that he had no doubt her design was to set him at ease, as soon as possible, with regard to Mabella's appro-

bation. "You see, my Mabella, that her plan succeeded," continued he, "and I believe you will without difficulty confess that your nerves are in better tone this morning, than they would have been, had all your delightful fears, and beautiful timidity remained in full force: don't be afraid of me, Mabella! all I wish, at present, is, that we should be quite at ease together. I have enjoyed two delicious months in your sweet society, looking forward, I confess, to this time, and anticipating a day; but I won't alarm you, we go to Purlbeck to-morrow, and, till then, be as you used to be, Mabella. Shall we resume our reading after breakfast?" "If you please," answered Mabella: "and pray take the set of books with you to Purlbeck! if my uncle is better, he will be glad to join our party."

Felix smiled to himself, while he promised to take the books; but then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he said, "As we shall probably *all* soon return here, perhaps a volume or two would do!"

"*All* return here?" said Mabella, with a smile; "I don't think you'll persuade papa to that!"

"If I cannot, you will, my sweet Mabella, depend upon it," said Felix; "and I hope that we shall, as your aunt expresses it, *Christmas* together at York. Mabella sighed, for her aunt's expression brought Cecilia and Normanburn to her mind, and Felix insisted on knowing why she sighed, and why her smiles were so soon banished. "It was only," said she, "the recollection of Normanburn." "Of Normanburn, and of my cousin?" asked Felix. "Yes, I was thinking of your cousin, too, Mr. Bonham; I was pitying her, though mistress of Normanburn." "Sweet, generous Mabella!" said Felix. "Doubly generous, and doubly magnanimous! how few women, even knowing all you know, would bear the mention of Cecilia without a pang. She has twice usurped your due right; yes, you look surprised; but, indeed, she has, my dear Mabella,

for that my heart was as much your right, as the Normanburn estate, is very certain; did you not claim and take possession of it from the first moment I saw you? you may laugh, my fair Queen of the Fairies, but so it was; and, I trust yet; yes, I trust *yet*, my Mabella, that your other property may be as surely restored to you, as *that* was."

"Nay, now, I must call you extravagant, indeed!" said Mabella. "Mr. Lightfoot has been many years in undisputed possession of what I once cared little about—now to be sure—but nothing can be more improbable than that the Normanburn property should ever revert to its right owners." Felix looked very grave for a moment, and then said, "Two months ago, Miss Normanburn, nothing could have appeared less probable, than that I should be at liberty to tell you I love you, and sufficiently blessed to have hope of a return: yet, so extraordinary is the change in my prospects,

that both are certain; why, then, may not some providential turn?—but whether or not—we will be happy, depend upon it, and till such a turn happens, we will think only of what is within our power."

"Agreed," said Mabella, "and as the book is on the shelf, pray put out your hand, and reach it; that is in our power."

Felix did as he was desired, and he turned over the leaves of the book as it laid on the table before him; but, somehow, it was not in his power to do more, for he continued to converse with Mabella, till his aunts came in, and the whole morning after, till dinner time; when, perhaps, a happier party never sat down to the social meal, than did so at Mrs. Bonhams': Felix and his aunts were more than cheerful, they were lively, and Mabella so completely lost all her unpleasant sensations, that she could hardly believe it was but the day before, Bonham had declared himself.

Before dinner was over, they were sur-

prised by the arrival of Colonel Milson, and Mabella, recollecting Mrs. Mary's *feint*, blushed when she saw him.

He informed them, that he was called suddenly to Town, by the death of a relation, who had, he believed, made him his heir; but that he should probably be in Yorkshire again before Christmas. "I won't ask you, Bonham, to go with me now," said he; "but after Christmas you must pay me a visit. I have a little scheme in hand, that concerns myself chiefly, however; but I shall want you, and come you must. You will give him leave to run away from you *then*, ladies?" added he, bowing to Mrs. Bonhams.—"Oh certainly, Colonel! as far as we are concerned, Felix is quite at liberty to accompany you *now*," answered Mrs. Mary. "Well, Bonham, what do you say? will you go and help me to settle old Truepenny's affairs? Nay, if you look towards Miss Normanburn, I have done! I dare not ask you again. By-the-

bye, Miss Normanburn, I shall take this opportunity of requesting that I may be admitted into the league: Bonham has, by this time, ascertained whether he likes you for a sister or not; and, as I probably was mistaken in supposing he would *not*, have you forgiven me yet? I hereby apply for his recommendation."

"As an admirable specific against low spirits, I can recommend you any where," said Felix: "but the truth is, that Miss Normanburn and I are not yet quite brother and sister, so your claim falls to the ground; at least, if it rested on our trying the relationship first."

"This I foretold, did I not, Mrs. Mary?" said the Colonel. "Well, I must wait with patience then, till Miss Normanburn will graciously admit me into the family compact." After some other trifling conversation, the ladies withdrew, and Mabella contrived to have every thing prepared for her journey before tea-time.

In the meanwhile, Felix informed his friend of the happy prospects before him, and that, as he did not doubt Mr. Normanburn's consent, he had given orders about writings, and other preparations, that would expedite the affair, and prevent delay, when once he could bring Mabella to consent to an early day. "The dear girl has no idea of what my hopes are, at present," continued he; "but I trust before Christmas that she will be all my own. In that case, you will find us here, for at present we shall make our home with my aunts. As my Mabella, however, has been used to the country, I propose, as soon as the spring comes on, to take her to my father's: she will be delighted with Devonshire; and he, I know, will be delighted with her; if it proves so, we may probably persuade my aunts to meet us in Town next winter; for the house in Portland Place is large enough for us all. Such, my dear fellow, are my de-

signs and projects; and now you know them, you can probably contrive to give us your company, either here or in Devonshire. My dear Mabella at present is afraid of you; she feels the delicacy of her situation, and I observed, yes with pleasure too, that the moment you began to address her, she looked to me for protection: but this will wear off, and she will talk to you with the same freedom from restraint she used to do." The Colonel warmly congratulated Felix on the prospect before him, and declared that he had from the first foreseen what would be the consequence of playing with kittens, and teaching them the cork exercise. "You really ought to thank me for your two months quiet courtship," said he, "for I had a sort of inclination to stay and contest the field with you: however, it is better as it is; you have secured *one* angel; but *are you aware, Bonham, that Miss Normanburn has no fortune?* now confess, Bonham, that even

when you said *that*, you were decidedly in love with your Mabella, and ready to cut any man's throat who should presume to offer her his hand." "Agreed; so I was, and the most miserable being in existence," said Felix: "but my present happiness amply repays me." The Colonel then informed hs f riend, that he had heard, Mr. and Mrs. Angelo Lightfoot had been some time at Brighton, where she was quite the rage, being indubitably the most beautiful woman in the place; and that Miss Trebern had gone there to meet them; but Angelo very wisely refused to let his wife have any further connexion with her, and that she complied with her husband's wishes with a good grace. "My informant adds," said the Colonel, "that a certain great man, whom we saw at Brushwood, pays her great attention, and that she has already his portrait set with brilliants to ornament her work-box. Her husband, who aims to supply by connexion what he wants

in blood, is very proud of this distinction, and, according to general scandal, willing enough to go to Heaven, as so many poor husbands do. In short, it appears that Cecilia is exactly in the situation best suited to her, at the head of fashion and haut-ton, and she and her Angelo are likely to prove a completely fashionable couple. She would not have suited the quiet style you like, at all, Bonham! your little Mabella, with all her primitive simplicity and loveliness, is more like yourself; and I don't doubt ten years hence to see her just the same interesting unsophisticated being she is now."—"Well, Milson, so I believe!" said Felix, "and if you will take my advice, you will seek out just a twin sister, and provide yourself with as sweet a prospect for life, as I have before me."

"All in good time!" said the Colonel: 'what if I should have found one?"

"And are you in love, seriously?" said Felix, laughing.

"By G—d, I'm afraid I am," said the Colonel, "for I've had no natural rest since I left her: a little provoking piece of lovely nature, enough to drive me mad. Why, do you know, that when I felt my frame trembling—yes, you may laugh! but, by Jove, it is true, Bonham! when I felt like a fool before her, and blushed like your Mabella, the little angel looked so roguishly arch through her own trepidation, that the only way I had of punishing her was clasping her in my arms, and kissing her heartily."

"And did you really? or is this the mere colouring of the piece?" said Bonham.

"No! truth, upon my honour—and it is the only way to deal with women, I'm convinced. Why, now, you won't pretend to say you have never kissed Mabella?"

"Never, upon my honour—I believe she would quarrel with me seriously, if I was to attempt it."

"Pshaw! nonsense," cried the Colonel, laughing; "why, don't *attempt* it then, but accomplish it at once: I'm very much mistaken, if that little rogue does not love you better than her eyes, beautiful as she thinks them, and, depend upon it, no woman quarrels with a kiss but to provoke another. However, my Anna, she's a beautiful creature; she put out her pouting lip, and pretended to be wrath, forsooth; so I was obliged to be steady, and the truth is, that I want you to be bridesman to me, when I return to Sir George Dellman's. It seems, now, that you'll be a Benedict before that time! Well, I must find another then; and I shall look in upon you as I fly down again to my bewitching little Anna."

"Has she a fortune?" said Felix.

"Psha! what does that signify?" said the Colonel; "old Truepenny has just died in the point of time, and so it is just the same thing, you know." The gen-

tlemen soon after joined the ladies, and the evening passed agreeably away: when the Colonel took leave, he said, that he found all hopes of carrying off Bonham were vain, and that he must seek another companion.

CHAP. IV.

The Difference between Duty and Love exemplified, with an Eulogium on Bumblekites, and a Peep at old Friends.—A Blessing.

On the following morning, Felix had the happiness to begin his journey towards Purlbeck with his aunts and his Mabella; and, as he bade adieu to the old city, he internally promised not to return to it, till he brought back his Mabella, a bride. His aunts, who knew his thoughts and intentions, enjoyed the little apprehensions that would sometimes cloud his brow, in spite of the hopes that animated him: and Mrs. Mary let slip no opportunity of alarming him, as well as Mabella, in her own lively manner. When people are happy, however, this sort of teasing and alarm does not by any means depress the spirits, and Mabella

even began to like to hear herself spoken of, as the wife of her Felix. The day, one of the finest that picturesque month of October can afford, passed away delightfully, and scarcely a cloud darkened the brows of the party, till just before sun-set, they came within sight of Normanburn.

What recollections did not that view bring to all minds? Cecilia, late the betrothed wife of Mr. Bonham, now for ever separated from her family, at least from all friendship with it, and about to become mistress of that house, and that domain, of which her husband's father had been suspected of murdering the owner. It might not be so; but, it might also. The Mrs. Bonhams could not repress their tears; and Felix pressed their hands in silent sympathy.

"I could have borne her running away," said his aunt Mary, "if she had married any thing, but a Lightfoot; but I never can get over that. The disgrace

is indelible! then her cruel usage of you!"

"Was it so very cruel, my dear aunt, to give me an opportunity of asking for my Mabella's hand?" said Felix, holding his to Miss Normanburn, "I thank you, dearest Mabella, for giving me this dear hand so freely, and so kindly; and be assured, that if Cecilia would or could return to me with fifty estates of the value of Normanburn, I should still prefer my generous, my noble, my confiding Mabella. See, my dear girl, if I mistake not, *that*, there to the right, is the sacred spot on which we first met! Is not that the oak, Mabella?"

"Oh! yes, indeed! that is Pike Hill!" answered Mabella, "and just below it stands my father's cottage!"

"And just before it your inheritance, my Mabella!" cried Mrs. Mary. "I cannot bear that any of my family should contribute to such injustice! but—"

"Nay, my dear! don't let us nurse

more uncharitable feelings, when we are going on a message of *love*," said Mrs. Sarah, "we shall now be soon at Burnthwaite, and must stop there, I think, and send our dear girl on in the carriage. What say you, Mabella?"

"Oh! no, dear ladies! pray go home with me," cried Mabella, "I never felt afraid to go home, till now."

"Bless me! what are you afraid of?" said Mrs. Mary, "we'll come down in the morning; and Felix may *then* make his proposal."

"I thank you, my kind aunt," said Felix, answering in her own tone, "but Felix intends making his proposal to-night. Nothing but Captain Normanburn's serious indisposition, which might render the mention of so happy a subject improper, shall induce me to remain another night in uncertainty; nay, even the prohibition of my Mabella herself would have no weight with me in this instance. I am determined; quite determined."

"Did you ever hear any thing so disobedient and so saucy?" exclaimed his aunt Mary: "why, when he was to marry Cecilia, he was all patient acquiescence in delay, and could even take time to stroll to woods, and to sleep under oaks, and meet fairy queens! a few days more or less made no difference! now he is all fire."

"Because now I am all love!" said Felix, "and the happiness of my whole existence depends on possessing my Mabella."

"Don't believe him, my dear," said Mrs. Mary.

"She can't help it for her life," said Felix, "for truth is irresistible. You do believe me! don't you, my sweet Mabella?" added he, as the carriage entered the village of Burnthwaite; and Mabella had only time to answer, "How can I avoid it?" when it stopped at Mr. Bleathead's door.

The Parson himself, and his well or-

namented wife, came forth to receive the York gentry, as Mrs. Bleathead called them; and the whole tribe of ragged urchins, now playing on the green, surrounded them. When the first salutations were over, and Mrs. Bonham had ascertained that she and her sister were to be once more the Parson's guests, while her nephew was accommodated with a room at Mr. Simpson's, she could not but survey the juvenile troop with wonder; for, in addition to their usual dirt and rags, many, nay almost all their faces were scratched and died purple, and their hands looked as if the Parson had given them all gloves alike, tinged of all colours. Mrs. Bleathead seeing the astonishment depicted in the faces of her guests, said, " I see Mrs. Bumham, that you stare a bit, at the Parson's young gentlemen; and if I'd a thowt on't, I'd have made'em wash their faces; but it's not muck, Mrs. Bumham, I can assure

you, for I must say, they are, as t' Parson says, *morals* of cleanness."

"Yas, yas," interrupted Bleathead, "maddles of propriety! quite, quite maddles of propriety!"

"Aye, so I was saying, Mr. Bleathead, if you had not ta'en me up," cried his wife. "Well, Mrs. Bumham! this here grimy look 's all nowt but bumblekites*."

"But what, Madam?" asked Felix, highly diverted with Mrs. Bleathead's apology, and who did not, like his aunts, know what bumblekites meant.

"Bumblekites, Sir; there was some left o't'hedges; so I sent out t' young gentlemen to scrat for their suppers."

"To be scratched, ma'am, I presume you mean," said Felix, gravely. "Well, really, they have been very obedient."

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* Blackberries.

"That, that is a matter of carse, Sar," cried Bleathead; "obedience is a child's first duty; and my yang gentlemen are maddles of obedience!"

"Then Bumblekites is nice wholesome food, Madam," cried Mrs. Bleathead. "I dare say, Miss Bell used to like them very well before she turned fine lady!"

"I assure you, I like them quite as well now as ever I did, Mrs. Bleathead," answered Mabella, "though, perhaps, I am not quite so willing to scratch my hands and face in procuring them."

The luggage of Mr. and the Mrs. Bonhams being, by this time along with Mrs. Fendwell, deposited at the vicarage, the carriage prepared to proceed, and Mr. Bleathead desired his models of obedience and gentlemanly conduct, who had stood gazing up at the visitors, like so many spread eagles on sign posts, to stand out of the way, that they might not be run over. Twice the Parson repeated

this, while the ladies were bidding adieu to Mrs. Bleathead; but not a boy stirred from his place; and Pulling, the coachman, being concerned for his horses, thus kept standing longer than was necessary, dashed off among them, to the great fright of the ladies, who screamed out to him to take care, and to the great wrath of Bleathead and his wife, who scolded heartily, and at last ended by a quarrel about one of the Parson's two bands, that had, by some means met with an accident.

As Mabella had learnt from Mrs. Bleathead that her uncle was better, the party proceeded to Purlbeck in high spirits; and as Felix assisted Mabella to alight, feeling her tremble with agitation and delight, he whispered her to be composed, and drawing her arm through his, followed his aunts and the rest of the party into the parlour. When the first transports of meeting again were a little over, Mabella's friends could not help

gazing on her improved person with delight; and her papa thanked her for the pleasure her letters had given him, and her uncle and aunt.

"I was particularly pleased with them," said he, "as they formed a nice relaxation from more serious occupation, and gave me a sort of intimacy with the world that I have so long left, without any trouble."

"I'm glad, dear papa, that they amused you," said Mabella.

"Indeed they did, my dear! so much so, that I ceased to repine at your absence!" answered Mr. Normanburn.

"Really, Mr. Normanburn, I am rejoiced to hear it too!" said Mrs. Mary, "as now we have once had Miss Normanburn's society we are unwilling to relinquish it again. But, my dear Mabella, we are delaying Mrs. Glassington, who, I see, has been kind enough to provide us an entertainment, as well as to give us a welcome."

The party then took some refreshment, and the Captain observed, that Mabella's journey had not got her an appetite; at which observation Mabella blushed, and Felix looked as much alarmed, as if he could not account for it. Those most interested in the events of the evening said but little; but this was amply supplied by Mrs. Glassington, who ran on in a surprizing manner, about fashions and races, plays and balls; shewing, by her manner, the deep regret she felt that she had not been a partaker in all the gaiety her niece had described.

"What a delightful scene you must have had, my dear Mabella!" said she; "you can never be grateful enough to the Mrs. Bonhams for such a treat! it may serve you to think on as long as you live!"

"I hope, Ma'am," said Mrs. Mary, "that we shall think of the happiness we have received in our dear Mabella's

society as long as *we* live! she has been our comfort in affliction, very great affliction too! and my nephew is particularly indebted to her; indeed, I may say she has been the restorer of his health and peace of mind! Sit still, my sweet Mabella! nay, if you will go, my dear, we will accompany you, and leave Felix to inform Mr. Normanburn of what our wishes and hopes are."

So saying, the kind aunt took Mabella's arm, and Mrs. Sarah, seizing that of Mrs. Glassington, the ladies all retired to another room, while Felix preferred his suit to the father and uncle.

During this time, Mrs. Mary related all particulars to Mrs. Glassington, and solicited her good offices with her brothers in favour of her nephew.

"The old connexion and friendship between the families will be renewed, and maintained by this marriage, my dear Madam," said she; "and the happiness of two beings, whom we love with

all our hearts, rendered as secure as human happiness can be. My nephew at present has a genteel income, and, at his father's death, his fortune will be large. What we have will be his, of course, or rather Mabella's, for we propose to add it to the jointure he will fix on her, in case she should survive him."

Mabella here burst into a passion of tears, and sobbed aloud on Mrs. Mary's neck.

"Forgive me, my love, for thus moving and distressing you," said the kind friend; "but the happiest unions must one day be dissolved, and, in all cases of this kind, it is right that a wife should know all that is done or intended. I hope we shall all be spared many years to you both, and you many, many years to each other! Nay, my sweet girl, compose yourself! I hear your papa's voice, and I am much mistaken if he is not seeking his Mabella. Courage, my dear! come—don't distress Felix."

During the whole of this relation, Mrs. Glassington was dumb with wonder and delight; and it was not till her brother approached, that she could find her tongue, and it was then employed to cheer Mabella, and to tell her she had nothing to be ashamed of, but on the contrary.

"I always said," she was beginning, when the entrance of Mr. Normanburn stopped her; and she looked at his heightened colour and agitated features with something like a dread, that his odd notions would make him reject an offer which for respectability could hardly be expected to be mended: poor Mabella felt the same dread, and gliding from the arms of Mrs Mary, she threw herself, almost fainting, at his feet. He raised her with a sort of tragedized air, and embracing her tenderly, said, "You have my consent and my blessing, my dear! I knew, from certain infallible signs, that the star of the Normanburns,

so long under a cloud, was rising again; injustice has had its day; it is finished! I have consented to part from you, my dear child, but it is to see you return with tenfold glory."

He then kissed her solemnly, and yielding her to Felix, who stood by, he gave them both his blessing. Felix, unable to restrain his transports, clasped her to his breast, and kissed her with an ardour that covered Mabella with blushes, and made her aunt start again; nay, she afterwards declared, that, though she knew but little of Mr. Bonham, and did not much like him, *that* kiss quite gained him her good graces, and convinced her he would make one of the best husbands in the world. Poor Captain Normanburn wept with joy; he declared that now his dear Mabella's happiness was secured, he had not a wish in the world ungratified, and that he preferred an alliance with the ancient allies and friends of the family to any other that

could have been proposed: mutual congratulations passed on all sides, and Mabella did not forget to present her lover to Molly Beale, whose grief for her handkerchief had probably in part caused the present happy situation of all parties. Molly put on her spectacles, to look at him, and examined his features with great minuteness; he bore her scrutiny with perfect good-humour (indeed, how could he do otherwise, when Mabella hung smiling on his arm?), and when she took off her glasses, asked whether she approved him or not?

"Why, aye! I can't say bud I do!" answered Molly; "and, to tell t' truth, I think you are o'most as bonny a man as she is a woman! and that 's saying as mich for you as any mon can expect. Bud, Lord, honey! she's clever, as weel as bonny! why, when you've getten her, you may brag you've a wife that need not turn her back of niver a gentlewoman i' t' county, for mending stockings

an making bread, puddings, and dumplings! aye, as white and as bonny as her hands look; they've helped me to fettle t' hoose mony a time! bud that's owr noo!"

And then Molly began to cry bitterly. Mabella kissed her with great affection, and assured her, that so far from its being over, she should find that the next morning she could fettle the house, and make the bread and the pudding for dinner, as well as ever she did. "Indeed, Molly, it behoves me to do my best," said she; "that Mr. Bonham may see you have not much over-rated my surprizing talents in the domestic way: indeed, I have no other talents," said she, half sighing.

Felix knew her thoughts, and pressing her hand tenderly, he assured her. that he valued a pudding more than a song, as he dared to say Mrs. Beale did.

This jocose assurance again set Mrs. Beale's tongue in motion, and she told

all Mabella's little roguish tricks, when she was young, and how she herself taught her all the learning she knew. To this artless and heartfelt praise of Mabella Mr. Bonham lent an attentive ear; and when he wished Molly good night, he presented her with a handsome silk shawl, that he had bought for her in York. Molly begged him to put it across her shoulders for her, and said it was exactly what she had wanted, and she would wear it on her dear Miss Mabella's wedding-day, whenever that might be.

CHAP. V.

Too delicious to be skipped over, or read inattentively.—Mr. Bleathead's Eloquence.

The following morning brought Felix to breakfast at nine o'clock, though his aunts did not arrive till twelve; and Mrs. Glassington observed, as he came up the garden, that she liked a brisk wooer. In truth, being now happy, he was so gay, and so lively, that Mrs. Glassington hardly recognized him for the same person, that she had seen at Harrogate; and she said, she did not wonder Mabella liked him! she did not know, if he had asked *her*, whether she might not have been brought to like him herself. She then reminded him how she had prophesied to him at Harrogate, that, perhaps, Fate might yet put a spoke in the wheel of his marriage with his

cousin; and told him, that wedding certainly went by fate. She wondered much that he and Mabella looked so very easy and composed, and like old married folks; and, when reminded that they had passed the last two months together, she asked, if they had not quarrelled sometimes.

Mr. Bonham easily fathomed Mrs. Glassington's character, but, determined to be pleased with all that belonged to his Mabella, he amused himself with her simplicity, and indulged her in running on in her own way. As soon as breakfast was over, however, he invited Mabella to walk, and she, nothing loth, instantly complied.

"I shall have no rest, Mabella, till we have together visited the spot where we met," said he.

"And that where we parted!" said Mabella. "I long to revisit both, as much as you can do. How different objects appear at different times," conti-

nued she, as they walked along; "often have I walked from our cottage to that turn in the road where we separated, and all I saw gave me only painful feelings! but now, late as it is in the year, and though the leaves are already fallen, there is a look of—I don't know what it is, but it exhilarates me!"

"It is happiness in your own bosom, my dearest life! and may it ever remain there, to gild every hour of your existence!" said Felix. "Oh! my Mabella, I too feel happy! and amply, indeed, am I repaid for all my sufferings! This is the spot, my Mabella—and this was the dear hand that I was compelled to relinquish: but never more will I resign it, but to receive it again, and make assurance doubly sure."

In this happy mood of innocent tenderness, did our two lovers pursue their walk, till they came to the very spot where they had first seen and loved each other; and here we are compelled to acknow-

ledge that a scene of tenderness passed, that it would be in vain for us to attempt to describe; and during which Mabella certainly permitted her lover to claim, and take that kiss she had, on their former interview, so properly refused him: here, too, she gratified him with the acknowledgment of her long-attachment to him, and, softened, perhaps, by these circumstances promised that she would grant him as early a day as she could with propriety consent to: she agreed to leave the fixing this day to his aunts and her's, and the grateful Felix thanked her most rapturously for her kind reference. "And now, my Mabella," said he, as she sat with her head on his shoulder, "tell me honestly, would it at first—I know it would not now—but would it at first have made any difference in accepting my hand, if you had been, as you ought, heiress of Normanburn?"

"I am half offended at your asking me the question, Felix," said Mabella,

raising her head, and surveying the mansion and rich lands before her; "but *certainly not!* I should only have the more sincerely rejoiced at having an estate to offer you. In truth, if regrets were not very useless things, I should now bitterly regret the not having Normanburn! but, perhaps, with so many blessings it would be wrong to repine: let Cecilia take Normanburn! she has left me happiness instead."

"I had a reason for asking you, my Mabella," said Felix; "and you will one day know it: in the mean time, be assured, you have replied exactly as I expected you would!"

Mabella looked with an inquiring look at her lover; but he smiled, and kissing her, told her she must not be curious.

Two delicious hours, such as we wish every youth and maiden who reads our true and authentic history to enjoy once in their lives, flew away with incredible rapidity; and, when the lovers returned

to the cottage, they found that their aunts and Middlemist had been some time arrived. Mabella, however, received no reproachful looks for her absence; and, contrary to his usual custom, Middlemist was loquacious and lively. He and Mr. Bonham greeted each other heartily, and he begged permission to congratulate Miss Normanburn as an old friend should do; on which, Mabella was presented to him by Felix. He took her hand, and contemplating the lines on it with great attention, he said, after a considerable pause, "You know, young lady, I go by the name of Conjuror Middlemist with our intelligent friend Mrs. Bleathead, and I am most happy to have the inspection of your fair hand on this occasion. I see nothing but what is beauteous to behold! The line of life is long and unbroken, and that of love keeps pace with it! May it do so, for both your sakes! But it appears to me that great events are on

the eve of being determined; and that a more brilliant fortune awaits you than you have ever contemplated! I hope I'm not mistaken, but time will shew. In the mean while, here are bride's favours in abundance, and if I dared to look farther into futurity——"

"No, no, Mr. Conjuror, no farther, if you please," said Felix, withdrawing Mabella's hand; "leave futurity to me! you have made such happy predictions, that I should be sorry if a word passed to cloud the pleasure you have given."

The gentlemen soon after all retired till dinner, to Mr. Normbanburn's room; and Mrs. Glassington going out about her domestic concerns, Mabella told Mrs. Bonhams the promise she had made Felix.

"Well, my dear generous girl, and you will abide by it?"

Mabella answered, that she would; and, at the same time, begged she might be hurried.

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Mary, "that I'll promise you. I really do not myself know any thing you have to do that requires above a week's preparation, as you must and shall go to York with us, and think about your permanent residence afterwards: so, to deal sincerely with you, my dear, we do hereby decree, that this day month you part for ever with the name of Normanburn, and become a very Bonham!"

"This day month!" said Mabella, startled at the shortness of the interval.

"Yes, my dear; and I must tell you, that it is the very longest time we can allow you; so act reasonably, as you always do; and when Felix comes for the sentence, I'll make a good report of you."

A cabinet council on dress and other preparations was then held, at which, to her great joy, Mrs. Glassington presided, and she looked at dinner so busy, and so important, that even Mabella

could hardly keep her countenance. She committed twenty ludicrous blunders, and talked so fast, and so loud, that nobody else could get in a word. Mr. Normanburn looked significantly at Middlemist, and said, "No; I see it would not do:" and, in return to his sister's demand of "what would not do?" he only said, "Be quiet, Jenny." Mrs. Glassington was, however, too happy to take offence; all she immediately longed for was to tell Mrs. Bleathead, and take her opinion about dresses, &c. and, to her great joy, Mr. and Mrs. Bleathead came almost immediately after dinner.

Felix was excessively amused with Mr. Bleathead, and his formal address to Mabella, on the news he had heard, that she was going to be married: "Miss Narmanbairn," said the Reverend Cicero, "I cangratulate you heartily on the joyful hope of becaming the wife—wife, Ma'am, of that haxcellent man! haxcellent! Ma'am, I shall hev the

satisfection, Ma'am, of reading you a discourse on the duties of that state—a haxcellent discourse, haltered by me, Ma'am, from an ancient divine, with additions of my own, Ma'am—and so fall and camprehensive of the sabjact, that I hev more than once read it to my helpmate, Mestress Blatehad, who is sartainly the best of wives, Ma'am; quite a maddle for wives!"

Mabella curtseyed in assent, and the Parson went on.

"And, Ma'am, she is a maddle for mothers, too!"

"My good Sir," interrupted Felix, trembling for Mabella's delicacy, "I really shall feel indebted to you to lend me that excellent discourse some time hence, for my perusal; it may be of use to *me*, as well as my wife; and after its happy effect on Mrs. Bleathead, I should be worse than mad to neglect it!"

Bleathead was so delighted with this compliment, that he forgot what he was

about to add respecting mothers, and after a long eulogium on his best of wives, his *maddle* for wives! he appealed to herself whether she had not derived the greatest benefit from the discourse in question.

Mrs. Bleathead, deep in a disquisition on long and short waists, had not heard what was going on, and she answered—"Benefit, Parson! not that I know of; it's enough for me to hear you preach i' t' pulpit; and you know I never allow a sermon any where in *my* premises!"

CHAP. VI.

A Visit to an old Friend, with Hints on the proper Treatment of Husbands, and other important Affairs.—The Family Piece, a true Anecdote.

One might imagine, that the specimen of matrimonial union and soft sympathy with which we closed the last chapter, might have given Mr. Bonham some alarm, and made him pause before he tied himself for ever to one wife; but, so powerful is love, that universal passion, that he was not in the least diverted from his purpose, and above a week of that month, he had yet to wait before he was at the summit of his wishes, had passed away with amazing rapidity, when a letter arrived from Mrs. Faraday to her friends, claiming their promised visit. She informed them, that an indisposition

had lately confined her to the house; and, added to the shortening days, prevented her from prosecuting her painting; that she had lately exchanged the pencil for the pen, but that she was now weary of that, and longed for a little rational society. She then added a pressing invitation to them to stay a fortnight with her, and begged they would bring Mr. Bonham with them, if he yet remained in Yorkshire. The letter concluded with an inquiry after Miss Normanburn, and a wish that she could be prevailed on to join the party.

Mrs. Bonhams, after considering the matter maturely, did not see any objection to accepting this invitation, for themselves, at least; and they thought that Felix and Mabella might accompany them, for one week, which was as long as they could conveniently stay.

Felix, who longed to be with his fair Mabella, where fewer and less boisterous visitors would interrupt them, gladly

acquiesced in the scheme, and undertook to reconcile Miss Normanburn to it, provided her friends would spare her.

As it was already determined, that the two Mr. Normanburns and Mrs. Glassington should pass their Christmas at York, and as, when the party returned to Purlbeck, they would yet have near a fortnight to stay before the wedding, all opposition on the part of the Normanburns was quickly reasoned away; and a letter was written to Mrs. Faraday, to inform her, when she might expect her visitors. Mrs. Glassington was really glad to have a clear field for action, and leisure to look over what Mabella wished to have prepared; as well as to arrange her own things for the wedding. Accordingly, at the appointed time, they began their journey, and arrived to a late dinner at the Hall; where the lady, and, according to her own account, the General, received them very kindly.

" I don't know how it is," said she,

looking at Felix and Mabella, "but other people seem to grow younger, while I certainly age apace. I'm sure, when I saw Mr. Bonham at Harrogate, he looked forty! you did, indeed! and this sweet girl was pale, and ten years older than her age! Now you are both young, blooming, and, I trust, happy! I confess, I did not expect to see Mr. Bonham in spirits at all, after what has happened!"

"Why, my dear Mrs. Faraday, you would not have seen me at all improved, had it not been for Miss Normanburn," answered Felix; "she is the sweet cure for my ills, and I hope, in much less than one little month, to have the happiness to present her to you as Mrs. Bonham."

Mrs. Faraday was exceedingly astonished at this intelligence; and, while she paid her compliment to the bride elect, would hardly be persuaded that it was really the case.

We have before said, that this lady had

much imagination; and she was never more interested than in a love story: she would not rest till she had heard every particular of Mr. Bonham's adventures, and, with Mabella's permission, he, on the second evening after their arrival, recounted them to her. She was enchanted with both himself and his lovely mistress, and declared, that she would forthwith commit the whole to paper, as it would form an excellent groundwork for a poem. "But, at present," said she, "I am not poetical! it is not the season! I have lately been exercising my pen in writing a love-tale in prose, founded on fact, though; for the heroine belonged to my father's house. It partakes of the distempered colour of my mind, and the mournful tinge of the time of year: and, as a love-story can never be unacceptable to lovers, if you like it as well as carols for an evening amusement, Mr. Bonham shall, if he pleases, read it to us! perhaps you will

think there is something of the vanity of an author in this! but that is not all—the General wishes to hear it again; he always loved my little productions, as well for the writer's sake as their own small merits; and I don't know how it is, but lately I have not been able to read to him as I used to do. We grow old, as I said before, and we are less able to amuse ourselves! and you, my valuable young friends, are in the bright summer of youth and love! May no clouds intervene, to diminish your happiness! Life soon passes over, and those are the wisest who earliest secure to themselves such connexions as will make it pass pleasantly."

As Mrs. Faraday's visitors could have no rational objection to hear her love story, and, as they hoped, by turning her thoughts into another channel, it might relieve her depression of spirits, which Mrs. Bonhams saw with much alarm, they expressed themselves highly

pleased with her proposal, and thanked her for permitting them to partake with the General. She looked round at them successively, as Mrs. Mary said this, as if some latent suspicion had lurked in her mind, that all was not right, and that her friend did not speak seriously; but no expression of an eye, no suppressed curl of a lip hurt her feelings, and she answered, that she was but too happy to have such auditors. She then inquired, where Mrs. Angelo Lightfoot was, and whether her aunts had yet forgiven her elopement? adding, "as to Mr. Bonham, "I see he bears her no malice."

"Felix has every reason to be obliged to his cousin," said Mrs. Sarah; "but *we* do not quite feel that. There is an odium attached to the name of Lightfoot, that can never be got over, at least, by us!"

"Why, to tell you the truth, so I think," said Mrs. Faraday; "and, if what is now talked so much about have

any foundation in truth, with great reason."

"Oh, Ma'am!" cried Mabella, "pray tell me what *is* talked about! Mr. Bonham has more than once hinted—yes, you know you have, Felix! that something about Normanburn was known, and that I must not be curious! but I can't help being curious, Mrs. Faraday; for is it not Mr. Bonham's interest now? —I hope I have leave to inquire?" added she, to Felix.

"Undoubtedly, my dear Miss Normanburn," answered Felix, with a smile, "while you look in that manner, you must have leave to do any thing you please. I myself shall be glad to hear what Mrs. Faraday knows; I should not wonder, if her intelligence goes much farther than mine."

"Now, really, Mr. Bonham, I have a great inclination to take Miss Normanburn apart, and to tell her alone!" said the lady of the house. "I see she is on a

wrong system! all love and obedience, and making your inclination the rule of her actions! 'Tis very pretty in theory, and would be in practice, if the men could bear to be so looked up to! but it spoils the poor children, and they grow as tyrannical as my son used to be with his dog. The poor creature watched his eye, and watched his movements, and invariably obeyed both; but still little master was not pleased, and always found some excuse to give it a blow. I was in hopes the evil would bring its own remedy, and I persuaded the General not to interfere: one day the animal, having received a kick, turned again, and made him feel, that it had the power to defend itself, and it was better treated, ever after."

"My dear Madam," exclaimed Felix, "if you preach such doctrines as these to Miss Normanburn, it will not be my interest at all to let her remain here! why, you will persuade her, that I must

necessarily prove a tyrant, and that her only safety is in shewing her teeth."

"Most of your sex are tyrants, Mr. Bonham," answered Mrs. Faraday; "I have seen a good deal of life, and I hardly recollect one married couple that has not, at one time or other, let me see, that all was not right in the interior! I would only advise Miss Normanburn not to be too complaisant at first; she may depend upon it, that there will be times when she will like her own plans to be followed, and when she will wish she had the courage to oppose you!"

"If I thought so," said Mabella, "I should hardly have the courage to marry at all."

"And don't you really think so?" asked Mrs. Faraday.

"No, indeed, I do not," said Mabella.

"And do you hope to live all your life in peace and harmony?"

"Why not?" said Mabella, "I have hitherto—I never quarrel with any body!"

"And would not you quarrel with Mrs. Angelo Lightfoot, if you met her?" "No, indeed!" said Mabella.

"Well, you are, considering that you are a beauty, a very extraordinary creature," said Mrs. Faraday: "why, even I and the General do not always coincide!" This was unanswerable, as nobody knew how to answer it; and even Mrs. Faraday herself paused, as if it was not quite what she intended to say: then, holding out her hand to Mr. Bonham, she said, "after all, Miss Normanburn's plan is, perhaps, the best, for it would be impossible to do, or say any thing to discompose the sweet serenity of her countenance. I thought her exquisitely handsome, when I first saw her, but she is now ten thousand times handsomer, and I only regret, that neither your stay nor my health, nor the light will allow me to

paint her head! you must let Lawrence paint her, when you go to town."

"Or suppose," said Mrs. Mary, "we were to engage the rising genius, who, from brushing the faces of the houses at T—— and Burnthwaite, has risen to brushing the faces of men. He has made a surprising likeness of Jacky Walker, the poor ideot, and this so delighted Mrs. Bleathead, that she never suffered her Reverend spouse to rest in peace, till he was engaged to make a family piece of the illustrious Bleatheads! I am sorry, my dear friend, that you don't happen to know the file-like face of the lady, which is as sharp as a new set axe, or the jolly unmeaning solemn visage of her husband, in his huge white wig, and his spectacles, for dignity's sake, sticking for ever upon it."

"Oh! I see the monster!" cried Mrs. Faraday, laughing heartily. "I assure you," continued Mrs. Mary, "that I account it one of the happinesses of my life,

to have seen him, and the progress of the family picture: and it has afforded both Bonham and ourselves much amusement. One morning Mrs. Bleathead tapped at my room door, and after many apologies for intruding, told me that she was come for advice. I inquired what had happened? and was informed, with much circumlocution and no small share of vanity, that she had at last persuaded *t' Parson*, as she called her husband, to patronize young Square, and have a family piece done. "And now Mrs. Mary," said she, "I want your advice about how we shall be put in! I am for having something in character to make an interesting piece of work of it; and I want to know how you think I shall look best!" "Why," said I, "you may be drawn as Venus, Madam, and Mr. Bleathead as Mars! she knew not, however, what to make of that! so then I proposed Apollo and Daphne, and all the ridiculous combinations I could think of; but she said,

she had herself thought of sitting in an arbour, with a fan in her hand, and her husband sitting by her, full dressed in his *comicals*, as she called them, and her two girls, one leaning on each knee, and looking up in his face. To this I could make no opposition; and the next grand question was, what she should be painted in? She shewed me two or three boxes full of gowns she had never had on, and selecting a pale blue silk one, which she assured me best suited her complexion, she uncovered her withered throat, and her half grey head, and having robed herself in celestial blue, we went down to the little back parlour, where the patient artist was waiting to begin his appointed task. The poor man, who, I saw, was afraid of any eye looking at his canvas, heard all the lady's instructions with great attention, and attempted; during the hour I staid there, several times to arrange his figures, but in vain! the Reverend Gentleman, in full canonicals, in vain looked pompous

and wise as he could; in vain he moved his chair, and changed sides with his bustling lady, no outline could be made, because no position suited her taste, and she told me afterwards that Mr. Square did not get them into their places till dinner time. I have been curious to watch the progress of this work of art, for which the painter is to receive five pounds, and it has already been twice laid in, and twice brushed out: and I really believe, myself, that the unhappy Square will never complete the unheard of performance, at least, to please Mrs. Bleathead, who charges him every morning to take care of her complexion, and put a little fat on her throat."

Mrs. Mary's account of the family piece answered the purpose she intended; it diverted her nervous friend, and changed the current of her ideas, and the rest of the party were unfashionable enough to laugh heartily. Felix, however, was not willing that Mabella's curiosity should be

disappointed, and he therefore reminded Mrs. Faraday that she had proposed to relate the gossip that was current about the Lightfoots; and, as the manuscript was not yet produced, the lady began, as may be seen in the following book.

END OF BOOK IX.

BOOK X.



CHAP. I.

Gossips and Gossipings.—An Author's Proposal.—Our Hero not ashamed of being in love.

"You will, perhaps, think it odd, Mr. Bonham, that I, who live so very retired, and see no company, should be enabled to tell you more gossiping stories than most of my neighbours! but so it is; and I can account to you satisfactorily for it. My domestics, though tolerably well trained and accustomed to solitude and seclusion, don't like it; they contrive to visit cottages and farm-houses now and then for the sake of amusement; they glean all that is to be gleaned; they im-

part it to my maid Tipping, and as the next pleasure to hearing, is telling again, I thus become acquainted with all the gossip of the family. To own the truth, neither the General nor myself have any objection to know how the world is going on, or to visit occasionally the cottage of the indigent. But this has little to do with what I have heard about the Lightfoots.

About a month after I came here, Tipping told me that about a furlong beyond the Park she had, in a romantic dell discovered two of the prettiest cottages she had ever seen: those in the New Forest were nothing to them! and that they were inhabited by a labourer, who had the prettiest wife, and two of the prettiest babies, that ever cried. "What," said I, "does a labourer inhabit two cottages at once?" 'No, Madam, but he does one.' "And who lives in the other?' 'Why, an old lady,

that is very good, and very kind, and quite a pattern for religion and charity.' 'In short,' said I, 'she is a Methodist.' 'Yes, Ma'am, and they say, she often goes to pray with the villagers at T——, where they have built a beautiful chapel.' 'Well, and what is her name?' 'Smith, Ma'am. Her husband was a farmer near Wetherby, and since he died, which is near sixteen years, she has been the great support of the meeting at T——.' Some time after hearing this, I was tempted to peep at these prettiest of pretty cottages, and I found Mrs. Smith teaching her neighbours' children to knit; an employment I could not but commend in any body. I talked to her about the families in the neighbourhood, and I found, that she knew all their histories pretty accurately; and, certain that she had not always lived so retired, I inquired how she bore it? she said, 'that she had enough to live on where she was,

and that being in the Methodist connexion, she had plenty of friends in the Lord!' I asked if she had any family? and she said, 'yes, one daughter, who was abroad with her husband.' From that time I have occasionally rested myself at Mrs. Smith's cottage, but I never could prevail on her to come to the Hall! she said she had made a vow never to go farther than T——. I think it must be nine or ten weeks ago, or more; it was just at the time of the grand fête at Brushwood, I walked into the dell; but I found Mrs. Smith's door fast. Her neighbour placed me a chair under the shade of a fine ash tree, and told me that Mrs. Smith's daughter had arrived in England to see her mother, and that the old woman was gone to meet her at T——. She then began to suppose that my Ladyship's Ladyship was going to Brushwood to the grand entertainment, and concert and ball; and when she heard that I was not, she told me her husband had got a

job there, and he had told her, what a power of fine folks were expected. She enumerated many, and said, that my Lady had asked all the beauties of the country, and among them Miss Normanburn.

I said I knew Miss. Normanburn. The woman shook her head, and said, it was a pity might should overcome right. I perfectly agreed with her, but added, that right could do nothing against a legal will. Mr. Lightfoot was, certainly, fairly intitled to the estates. 'Aye, Madam, but there's another story was rife enough at one time!" said she. 'They say as how that will was not the will, and that, if it was sought into, Miss Normanburn might yet have her own.' "Oh!" said I, "that is impossible! for I know that, at the time, a legal friend took care to have the will examined." The woman still persisted, and, though she could not tell how it was, she knew, she said, that *that* will was not the will.

"And is it possible," said Mabella, in great agitation, "is it possible that there can be any doubt, any chance?"

"That there is a doubt, my dear, is certain; but as to chance, that is yet in the dark," said Mrs. Mary; "but don't let us interrupt Mrs. Faraday! I am anxious to hear." Mrs. Faraday went on.

"I asked the woman where she heard all this? and she said she had heard of it in many places, and, moreover, that old Madam walked at Normanburn, and with good reason too:—murdered folks never laid still in their beds.

"I own, I was startled to hear a woman talk in this way, and I reproved her for slandering a person, she did not know, and who had never done her any harm. She still persisted, that a spirit would not walk for nothing, and that old Lightfoot might as well confess, for his very look told what he had been at. Well! I returned home, and, I confess,

gave no credit to this, as I imagined the whole to arise from the ill will of the world to a man who had unjustly become possessed of wealth; but, at the same time, I must own, I thought old Mrs. Normanburn deserved as much detestation as Mr. Lightfoot. I was taken ill about this time, and never went out without Tipping, and I did not go near any body; so that I think it was not till seven or eight days after the fête, that I was told that Mrs. Smith's daughter had gone to Brushwood with her neighbour, who worked there; and that she was taken so ill, as to be brought away from the grounds, and that the cottager had come away, and walked home with her. It was, at the same time, added, that she had been frightened at the sight of Miss Normanburn."

"How very odd!" said Mabella, again interrupting Mrs. Faraday: "don't you remember, Mrs. Mary, that poor woman

in the conservatory? who could she be?"

"That is precisely what we have been wanting to discover," said Mrs. Mary; "but pray, my dear, rein in your impatience, I long to hear where she is now?"

"That is more than I can tell you, my dear friend," answered Mrs. Faraday. "There was something so odd in any person being frightened at Miss Normanburn, who, according to my ideas, and those of Mr. Bonham, is made to attract, (Felix bowed assent) that, after thinking about it some time, I told Tipping she should go down the next day, and see how the woman was. The next day was rainy, and again a day or two elapsed, and, at last, when she did go, she found the cottage shut up, and heard that Mrs. Smith was gone into Lancashire with her daughter."

"And has she never returned?" said Mrs. Mary. "I believe not: I have never heard that she has," said the lady.

"Then, I fear, we are just where we were," said Felix; "but time and perseverance may do much! that woman must have had some strange recollections to make her faint when she saw Miss Normanburn! we may yet discover who she is! and now, Madam, we shall feel indebted to you, still to treat the whole as an idle story! for any idea that we thought otherwise of it, would certainly put the enemy on his guard."

"Then, do you really think there is any thing in it?" asked Mrs. Faraday. "It is difficult to know what to think," answered Mrs. Mary; "after all it may be nothing."

"I augur better of it," said Mrs. Faraday; "and let me tell you, I sometimes fancy I have a sort of a presentiment.—Oh! how glad should I be! My dear Miss Normanburn, I will positively come and see you at Normanburn! I must not be refused!"

"I hope, Madam, you will not defer

your visit till then; that is, till I am at Normanburn," said Mabella, with a smile; "pray, come before that time!"

"Mabella, you see, Madam, won't invite you to Normanburn; she has no faith!" said Mr. Bonham. "I, however, do, with all my heart, and, when that is the case, she will not fail to welcome you."

Mrs. Faraday thanked Mr. Bonham, and the lights being all duly arranged, Mrs. Mary asked if the manuscript was forth-coming? The fair author opened a bookcase, and taking out a few sheets of paper, written in a tolerably legible hand, presented it to Felix. "I hope you can read it without too much trouble," said she; "it is just as I first wrote it, and the chapters have got no mottoes to them. You will, perhaps, wonder that I took the pains to divide my subject at all into chapters; but, in writing, I find them admirable resting places, as well as in reading: and when I have finished my

chapter, I can go to bed with pleasure. I shall judge by the effect my love story has on you, ladies, whether it would be likely to succeed, or not, in the world: not that I am resolved to publish—on the contrary! but there is no knowing!"

The lady having finished this explanatory speech, and Felix snuffed the candles, he read to a very attentive audience about half the manuscript, whose contents we should have inserted here, as well worthy our reader's perusal, if we had room for so long a narrative.

"The story is simple, pathetic, and interesting," said Mrs. Sarah, "but as we are at the end of a chapter, and a favourable pause, we must, I believe, defer the rest of the story till to-morrow. You have, my dear friend, given a picture of true love and conjugal felicity, that beguiled our Mabella of her tears, and even your reader, I think, has shewn that his feelings were in unison."

"How could they be otherwise, and

my Mabella so near me?" cried Felix: "I own I am deeply interested in the story, and shall long for an opportunity of concluding it."

"Well!" said Mrs. Faraday, "I am rejoiced to see one man not ashamed of being in love! since you approve my story, I shall like it better than ever I did."

The friends then separated for the night, and till Mabella met Felix the next morning, she had no opportunity of satisfying her curiosity respecting the woman at Brushwood; she was kept awake the greatest part of the night by her own vague conjectures; but at last, sleep took pity of her, and she dreamed of the touching story, she had heard read, till morning.

CHAP. II.

A confidential Tête-à-tête.—No Hopes.—A curious Anecdote.

The hints respecting Normanburn were not forgotten when Mr. Bonham met his Mabella in the breakfast room, and he did not wait to be asked before he mentioned it.

"I see, my dear anxious Mabella," said he, "that you are very *curious* this morning, and I wish to God that I was better able to gratify your natural wish to be acquainted with the acts of your great grandmother. You may remember that, during the race week at York, Mr. Middlemist paid my aunts a visit. It was to inform them that the report Mrs. Faraday mentioned of Lightfoot having taken possession under either a forged will, or a will that had been superseded

by another posterior to it, was revived; and that he was credibly informed by a person, who saw the woman, whose strange behaviour surprised us at Brushwood, that she was certainly the daughter of old Mrs. Normanburn's confidential servant; that immediately after receivi g the legacy Mrs. Normanburn had bequeathed to them, these women had left the neighbourhood, and that the younger had boasted, that, in addition to her legacy, Mr. Lightfoot had given her five hundred pounds, which, with her hand, she bestowed on the butler. This butler, who had been only about a year with Mrs. Normanburn, was a native of Ireland, and his wife was supposed to have accompanied him thither.

"There was something so singular in the revival of the story, just at the moment this woman appeared, and this singularity was so much increased by her emotion at seeing you, that Mr. Middlemist determined to make every inquiry

he could about the events of that period; as he acknowledged, however, without any hope of discovering a fraud, even if there had been one. He employed a friend in London to examine the will, who reported that it was correct; and thinking that among Mr. Croker's papers there might be something overlooked by his son, or concealed by him, he paid that gentleman a visit.

"He found him in no very good humour, and but little inclined to talk about Normanburn. But Mr. Middlemist would not be foiled! and he at last prevailed upon him to say, that in a pocket-book of the year — he had found a memorandum of having waited on Mrs. Normanburn on the morning of the 3d of August: there were the heads of the conversation, in the course of which she informed him that, during the four days Mr. Lightfoot had been in the house, she had seen many things in him that she disliked; that she repented her usage of her grandchildren,

but that she had so solemnly vowed never to leave them the estate, that her conscience would not let her do it; but that she would leave it to the boy, and in the event of his death to the girl—that was your brother and yourself, my dear Mabella. That he was to prepare instantly a will to this effect, and to deliver it to her the next day but one. Then there was on the 5th a memorandum, that he did deliver the will, and that Mrs. Normanburn enjoined him to secresy, till she could decently send Mr. Lightfoot off. There was a memorandum of her death, suddenly, on the evening of the 9th; and in another book one, many months later, of having endeavoured to discover what had become of this will, and whether it had been executed or not. These were strong circumstances, my dear girl, and from the perfect silence maintained by the Lightfoots respecting such a will, or copy of one, having been found among the old lady's papers, Middlemist felt

persuaded that it must have been executed, and probably destroyed by old Lightfoot. Croker leaned to the same opinion, and they agreed that it was probable that the two women and the man had been privy to the existence of the will.

"By my aunt's advice (*I* was not then consulted, Mabella) Middlemist imparted all this to Captain Normanburn; but, for fear of your father's nerves, it was concealed from him, and Mrs. Glassington's tongue (pardon me, Mabella) was not discreet enough to allow her to be trusted.

"Since the period I mentioned, Mr. Middlemist has used every endeavour to discover the woman who fainted, and the old mother, if yet alive, but without effect, and for this Mrs. Faraday's relation sufficiently accounts. You see, my beloved girl, that all we know, amounts merely to the old lady's intention to make your brother or yourself her heir: of that there

is no doubt! but, in my opinion, that is all we shall discover: if such a will was executed, which might be, as Mrs. Normanburn was a woman of business, and was at no loss as to the proper number of witnesses, or any thing else, Lightfoot, of course, threw it into the fire. I have no hope that we shall ever hear its fate. On the evening, however, when I asked for my Mabella's hand, I thought it right that Mr. Normanburn should be informed of all this, and thence the agitation he appeared in. *He* is perfectly assured that his Mabella will return to the halls of her ancestors! but hope will believe impossibilities!"

"Then what could my papa mean, when at dinner he said to my uncle, 'it would not do,' and looked at my aunt?" said Mabella.

"Why, my sweet girl, he had been very desirous to inform Mrs. Glassington of what Middlemist had heard," answered Felix, "which the Captain, for prudential

reasons, opposed; and I suppose he was at that moment convinced, it would not do."

"And did you refrain from telling *me*, for the same reason?" said Mabella, archly.

"No indeed, my dearest life! I refrained," said Felix, "because I thought you had borne agitation enough, and I was jealous of any idea that should for a moment divert your mind from your happy and highly honoured Felix. I am certain that your prudence might in any case be trusted! and I promise you that you shall know every discovery we make, if we make any. We have now a chance of learning where this Mrs. Smith is gone! most likely the inquiries Mr. Middlemist set on foot have driven her for a season from her retreat. She can tell, if she will, I believe, what became of that will, old Croker made."

"Whatever became of it," said Mabella, with a sigh, "I must, I fancy, be

contented with the knowledge of Mrs. Normanburn's good intentions towards me. I must confess, that for my father's sake I would rather she had left it to him. I should not like to inhabit Normanburn, and see my father at Purlbeck."

"My dear, right-feeling Mabella!" said Mr. Bonham, "nor should you ever see that! If Normanburn was ours, we should not want it for a residence! my father has a noble one that must one day be mine, and I solemnly declare that nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see Mr. Normanburn at the family house. Mabella and I could not have two opinions on that head." The entrance of Mrs. Faraday prevented Mabella from replying to this generous declaration, and during breakfast the conversation was general and uninteresting: when Mrs. Bonhams joined the party it turned on those minute and trifling circumstances that sometimes determine the destiny of mortals, and after many ex-

amples adduced by some of the company, Mrs. Faraday said, sighing, that she had had a melancholy one in her own family. "My brother, Major Brentmore, nearly lost his life, and a delightful wife, by a circumstance I dare say you recollect?" said she.

"I recollect many years ago that the Major was severely wounded in a duel," said Mrs. Sarah, "and I think it was fought about a lady."

"That was the strangest and the most fatal thing!" cried Mrs. Faraday, "and I'll tell you how it was. The Major was at that time paying his addresses to the present Mrs. Brentmore, and he went down into Hertfordshire to make the final arrangements for his nuptials. Blossom Lodge, close by the grounds of Sir George V——, had been then occupied about two months by a Mr. Maddison, a man of some fortune and connexion, who had brought his bride there to pass the summer; and Mrs. Maddison frequently stroll-

ed into the plantations of V—— Park, either with her husband, or alone. On the third day after Brentmore's arrival, he was crossing a wooded path that led to the village, when he perceived Mrs. Maddison, a delicate, timid woman, keeping at bay with an umbrella, a large, fierce-looking dog; and, flying to her assistance, he drove the animal away, and then returned to see whether she wanted any further help. He found her so exceedingly exhausted, that she was obliged to sit down on the grass, at that time damp after rain: and fearing that she might take injury from this, he raised her, and bending one knee, supported her on the other: she was very faint and unable to speak, and her head fell back on his shoulder.

"They had been about thee or four minutes in this position, when Mr. Maddison, who had been a few days in London, appeared in the path, and, struck motionless with the suspicious circum-

stances he found his wife in, neither advanced, nor spoke. The Major called to him to assist him, as the lady was ill, but still he spoke not; she herself began to revive, and, perceiving him, tried to rise to go to him. Still he gave no answer, but running off with the speed of lightning, he soon returned with two pistols, of which he offered the Major his choice. It was in vain that Brentmore would have explained; it was in vain that Mrs. Maddison vowed and supplicated; he was inflexible.

"'You both,' said he, 'act your parts to perfection, and I am desirous to perform mine as well. I have a perfect conviction of my disgrace; and it is incumbent on me to procure all the reparation in my power: take your choice, Major Brentmore!'

"What more passed I know not, but they fought on the spot; my brother was wounded, and Mr. Maddison, after sending people to his assistance, left the place

and his wife, and afterwards the kingdom. The poor woman has a comfortable income, and lives near me in Hampshire; but she has lost her character, nobody visits her. For my own part, I solemnly believe, that my brother's account was every tittle true, and that he had no more connexion with Mrs. Maddison than with Queen Elizabeth. I therefore often go with the General to sit with her, and she is now tolerably reconciled to the loss of a man, whom she loved very sincerely. My brother succeeded in convincing Miss V—— of the truth; but I expected at one time, that the match would have been broken off."

"I wonder it was not," said Mrs. Mary: "I remember the affair, now you recapitulate the particulars; they had escaped me! You see, my dear Mabella, how dangerous these wooded walks are! and yet, if it did not rain, I should wish you and Felix to take one, just to peep at this beautiful dell with the pretty cottages."

Mabella and Felix had formed the same wish, but the heavens were adverse, and the lovers obliged to find amusement within doors: this being the case, Mrs. Faraday was requested to favour them once more with her manuscript, and the story was concluded.

CHAP. III.

A happy Descent into the Vale of Years.—An old Servant's Confessions—Farewell Hope.

It is not to be supposed that Mr. Bonham read, or the ladies heard, Mrs. Faraday's pathetic story, without much emotion; and, what is singular enough, that lady herself was as much affected with the work of her own genius, as any body else.

"You wonder to see me so much moved, I see you do," cried she; "but I can't help it; and I own that scenes springing from my own imagination have a surprizing effect on me. At one time I was in doubt whether, for the sake of effect, I should not falsify the truth of the history, by giving it a fatal termination; for you will perceive that it might easily

have been done; but it would have broken my heart to have contemplated the misery I had caused, and the General never in his life could bear a tragedy. So it is as well as it is! I'm glad you are pleased with it."

Mabella was surprized at almost all she heard Mrs. Faraday say; but considering her a little insane, she pitied her while she admired her.

On the following day the weather cleared up, and as the afternoon promised to be fine, Mrs. Faraday had an early dinner, in order to afford her young friends an opportunity of walking through the grounds to the Dell; and accordingly, as soon as the cloth was removed and Mabella had put on her thick shoes, and her walking dress, they set off on their expedition. They found the distance more than they expected, but the beauty of the scenery, even so late in the year, and the happiness they experienced in each other's society, left them no cause

for complaint or regret; and they at last arrived at the entrance of a winding road, overshadowed by fine trees, not yet quite stripped of their russet clothing. The sun was no very great height above the horizon, and his pale rays only occasionally found entrance between the branches of the trees; but even the gloom was agreeable, and, added to the interest of their own situation, and the search they were engaged in, it produced on their minds that sort of pleasing melancholy that rather warms and gratifies, than depresses the heart. They walked on in silence, Mabella, as the gloom increased, clinging closer to the arm of her lover, and he pressing still more tenderly the hand that was locked in his.

"This scene, my dearest life, irresistibly inclines one to moralize!" said he, as they reached the lovely spot where the cottages stood: "it represents that descent into the vale of years, that I trust

we are destined to make together; and, if we make it thus tenderly united, and mutually supporting each other, old age will not be less pleasing than the quiet and lovely scene before us. See, there is the cottager's wife milking her cow, while her children standing by are watching her labour, doubtless anticipating the delicious supper they will have! the dog, too, sympathizes with them, and looks only one degree less intelligent than they do."

"I think, too, there is her husband coming home, just below that pretty rustic bridge that crosses the stream," said Mabella. "Oh! yes it is, for see! the eldest child has run off to meet him! how happy the woman looks!"

Felix again pressed Mabella's hand, but he did not venture to let his lips utter the hopes, wishes, and prospects, this scene of domestic life gave rise to; and advancing towards the cottages, he accosted the woman, inquiring whether her

neighbour, Mrs. Smith, was at home or not? The woman replied, that she had returned home with her daughter two days before, but that, at present, she was not in the cottage, being gone to a love-feast at T——.

" And at what hour will she return?" said Mr. Bonham.

" That's muore than I can tell," answered the woman; " there's a nice moon now, and, I reckon, she'll not come till near bed-time. My husband there has promised to fetch her, as she's a bit flay'd sin so mony folks ha' been after her."

" How do you mean?" asked Felix.

" Mean, Sir? why, there's an auld gentleman cam hisself, a bit sin, to see if she was here, and, as she says, she can't think its for ony good folks cums a plaguing her."

" Well!" said Felix, " I assure you we mean no injury to your neighbour by our inquiries; we are visitors at G. Hall,

and the lady who lives there, and who often comes to see your neighbour, having mentioned to us the beauty of this place, and the respectable Mrs. Smith, we took a walk down to see her."

The woman, on hearing this, was very civil, and said, if the gentleman and his wife would please to sit down in her cottage, and were not afraid to walk home by moonlight, she dare say the old lady might be at home in an hour or an hour and a half, and she would send off her master to meet her, as she had desired.

The evening being fine, though cool, and Mabella having no fear while she was with Felix, he accepted this offer, and the woman, stirring her fire, made the children's milk-porridge, and invited her guests to have some tea and brown bread and butter. The invitation was accepted; and, during her preparations, the good woman indulged herself in talking of her children, who were really very fine, rosy-cheeked cherubs. She

told all their tricks and all their gambols, and was delighted with the kind notice Miss Normanburn took of them.

"Aye, my lady!" said she, "ony body may see you've had bairns yoursell! a mother's a mother! and I niver find ony body else tak half t' notish o' t' bairns as them at knows what it is to breed and nurse 'em!"

Poor Mabella blushed crimson, and Felix, (who, while he contemplated her as she nursed the youngest, could not but anticipate the delight he should have in seeing her a mother) answered, that the good woman was mistaken, the lady had no children of her own.

"Then, I' sure, I whop she will, for she'll be a right handy nurse, and fay amang 'em nicely! that I can see!" said the woman.

Felix then asked where Mrs. Smith had been so long? and the woman said, that she understood she had been to Liverpool to settle some affairs about her

daughter, whose husband was going to live there.

"They say at t' rebels i' Ireland has doed up every thing, and t' poor fellow's not so weel off as when he went there, and so he's lucky enough to have a friend, as has helped him, and he's come to keep a slop-shop i' Liverpool," said she.

The party having had their tea, and the moon being risen in great beauty, Felix said, if Mabella would not be too much fatigued, he should like to see the country by moonlight, and they walked down from the cottage to the rustic bridge, and leaning against the rough wood that formed its sides, viewed the indistinct but pretty prospect of the road to T——, and the spire of a church that rose at no great distance from them. The air being frosty, the moon shone with great splendour, and Felix contemplated his lovely companion as she stood silvered over, as it were, with its beams, with admiration. They had not stood

very long thus, when they perceived somebody approaching, and imagining it to be the two women, Felix was desirous to see what effect the sight of Mabella would now produce on her who fainted at Brushwood: he requested her to put her hat backwards, and expose her face now distinctly seen, and to look at the woman as she approached. She instantly complied, and standing about the middle of the bridge, waited with some trepidation for the event.

The cottager left the daughter to take care of the mother, and preceding them walked in to his supper, and it was not long before Mrs. Smith, who was a little lame, reached the bridge too. She and her daughter stopped when they saw Mabella, but they neither of them spoke: there was a considerable pause, during which the women seemed to be collecting themselves, and the silence was at last broken by Miss Normanburn.

"I fancy, Ma'am, that your name is

Smith?" said she to the elder woman. To this she received no answer! It was impossible, under the large close bonnet of Mrs. Smith, to see what was the expression of her features; but she seemed trying to reply, and once or twice moved the hand her stick was in, as if with impatience." "I am sorry to impede your way, Mrs. Smith," said Mabella, "you do not know me, and"—"I do! I do know you!" said Mrs. Smith.—"Indeed!" said Mabella. "Yes; your name is Normanburn," said Mrs. Smith. Felix now spoke, and said; "You are quite right, Mrs. Smith, this lady's name is Mabella Normanburn, and hearing that your daughter, whom she saw ill at Brushwood, was here, she walked down to inquire after her." Here the daughter sighed deeply, and Felix went on. "If you please, we will accompany you to your cottage." Mrs. Smith made a motion of assent, and Mabella, letting her pass, followed to the cottage.

The cottager brought a candle, and, stirring the fire, left Mrs. Smith and her company. After contemplating Miss Normanburn with great earnestness, Mrs. Smith turned to Felix and said, " And pray, Sir, who are you? are you a lawyer?" This question convinced Felix that she imagined he was come to examine her; he did not choose either to affirm or to deny that he was of that profession, whose members are so aweful to all who have any connexion with them, whether innocent or guilty, but answered, " Mrs. Smith, it is of little consequence who I am! you will know, ere long! you know *enough*—you know *why* I come with this lady to visit you." As Felix pronounced this somewhat solemnly, and even sternly, the daughter, who had been crying violently, started up, and throwing herself at the feet of Mabella begged that she would have mercy upon them.

" Then, discover all you know!" cried

Felix; "it can no longer be concealed." The daughter was about to begin her relation, when the mother, recovering her composure, said,—"All we know, Sir, can neither do this lady any good, nor us any harm! My daughter, there, like a fool, is frightened at being asked; and I don't know why, Sir! the Lord will protect his chosen; and if all Miss Normanburn wants to know is about *the will*, I am willing to tell her, or you, or any body else. The noise there has been in the country about it, has frightened me, I own; but, Sir, I was not afraid of the Normanburn family, and, indeed, why should I? I was afraid of that man that has the estate! he knows how to—but I don't mean to accuse him, or any body else;—as I said before, the Lord will protect his chosen, and, as I was a faithful servant to old Madam Normanburn, I have nothing to reproach myself with."

"Pray, pray tell me!" said Mabella, in great agitation.

"Oh!" cried the daughter, "how like is her voice, as well as her face, to Mrs. Lucius Normanburn!"

The mother frowned, and, after lifting up her hands and eyes as if in prayer, said, "I have assurance of help! the Lord be praised! blessed be the name of the Lord! Well, Ma'am, I will answer any thing you want to know."

"You can be no stranger to what we want to know," said Felix: "we want to know where that will is, that Mrs. Normanburn executed a short time before her death; sometime between the 5th and the 10th of August; and we have no doubt you can inform us! Have *you* that will?" "I have not!" said the woman. "Do you know who has?" "I do not." "Where was it deposited?" "That I cannot tell, Sir! I can only tell you, that when my lady signed her first will she mentioned to us all what she had done for us. Heaven bless her holy and happy soul! we all praised the Lord, and my

good Lady! Well, Sir, my Lady had Mr. Lightfoot to stay, and one day they had some words about something, I know not what; but my Lady sent for Mr. Croker, and she seemed odd and queer, but she never forgave no curiosity, so I know'd nothing of what was a going forward: but, on the Sunday night, she bid me bring my daughter Betty, here, she had been to wait on Mrs. Lucius, and Hugh O'Connor, the butler, as was to marry my daughter, into her own little study room, that opened to her bed room, the next morning at eight o'clock. Sir, you won't wonder I am agitated! I had lived a long time with my Lady! She was very good to every body, but her own family! but she's in Heaven! the Lord's mercy be praised!"

"Pray, go on, Mrs. Smith!" cried Mr. Felix: and the pious woman, after wiping her eyes, proceeded.

"Well, Sir, when we came to my Lady, (I had dressed her two hours earlier

than was used, that day!) she bid me light her wax-taper, and taking her own seal, she made a seal on the corner of a parchment, and bidding us all look that we could take our oaths, she signed her name, and then said, she delivered that to us to sign as her last will and testament, and we all signed it;—when she had done, she thanked us for our services, and made us swear not to tell any body what we had done, or what she should tell us, till after she was dead. She did, indeed, Sir! and we took the oath on our salvation!—Then, Sir, my Lady said that she should write a letter with that will to her daughter and Mr. Normanburn, who were executors, to desire them to reward us three, as she had put no legacies in. I think she said something about lawful witnesses, and legacies; but I did not quite understand it! I never saw my Lady more herself than she was that day! and she was more than double civil to old Dr. Lightfoot, though I know she

said he would be gone before the 12th. This was on the 8th, Sir, and on the 9th, Sir, she was taken ill after breakfast, and was in racking pain, and sick, and Doctor Lightfoot gived her a great deal of laudanum to quiet her, but she died at night!"

"Well! and what became of the will?" cried Felix, shocked at the scene of iniquity this relation unfolded.

"I wish I had known *that*," said the woman with quickness: "but I do not: it was never sent out of the house, to my knowledge! and I took care to search all where I could, but I never found it!"

"Doubtless Lightfoot got it, and destroyed it!" said Felix. "No! I am *sure* he did not!" answered Mrs. Smith.

"And how can you be sure of that?" asked Mabella.

"Because, Ma'am, when I told him of that will, I know he searched every box, and table, and drawer, and he believes now that I have it! I know he does! and

that's why I am afraid of him! but, indeed, if I had, I should be glad enough to give it to you, Ma'am! indeed, I should! I am well to do in the world, thank the Lord, and my Lady's bounties! but my conscience would not let me cheat the widow and the orphan!"

"Where could the will be put?" cried Felix, hardly attending to the woman's protestations.

"I know not, Sir! we searched the iron closet, and my Lady's own writing table! the most likely places, unless Mr. Croker had it!"

"Writing table!" said Felix.

"Yes, Sir! it was a large old oak table, made with places inside for boxes and papers; and my Lady kept her letters in it! Mr. Lightfoot took out every slip and every drawer, and he would have knocked the bottom out, if it had not been so solid; there was not even a bit of dust left in it."

The relation of this transaction con-

vinced Mr. Bonham, either that the woman had the will, and by means of it extorted money from Lightfoot, or that Lightfoot had actually found and destroyed the will; the more probable thing, as it accounted for the fear, that the women evidently felt of him. In either case, as it appeared Lightfoot had kept his own secret, there was no hope for the Normanburns, and he determined to think no more about the matter. Mrs. Normanburn having told her servants that in the last will they had no legacies, had probably determined the fate of her great grandchild, and that fate appeared now irreversible.

Mr. Bonham then rose to depart, and after thanking Mrs. Smith for her trouble, gave his arm to Mabella: as he was quitting the cottage, however, it occurred to him, that if ever a will should be found, it would be of the greatest importance to the family to perpetuate the testimony of these two women, and un-

willing to trust them out of his sight, even one night, he hesitated at the door. He was debating in his own mind what course to pursue, when Jemmy, Mrs. Bonham's man appeared, and told him, that his mistress, alarmed at his staying so late, had sent the carriage round to take Miss Normanburn home. "Then," said Felix, "there is no difficulty! Mrs. Smith, it is incumbent on you to retrieve your own character from the suspicions, which, I know not how, have been propagated: the family of Mr. Normanburn must now be too well assured that the will you mentioned was never forthcoming; and, of course, all blame on you, or even Mr. Lightfoot ought to be done away."

"Certainly, Sir! so it ought!" said the old woman, "and I wish I knew any way to bring that to pass!"

"The best way, Madam, one attended with no risk to yourself, and which will be very satisfactory even to Mr. Light-

foot, I should suppose, is to make affidavit of what you have told me before a magistrate!" said Felix.

The woman seemed at first alarmed at the proposal, as conceiving it was meant to entrap her; but at last, after a full half hour's debate with Mr. Bonham, she consented to accompany him to F—— Hall, the seat of a distinguished magistrate, respected not only by the whole neighbourhood, but by the whole county. When she recollected, too, that she could still say or not say what she pleased, and that by this act she should secure the patronage of the friends of the Normanburns, a thing, that, considering all things, she was very desirous of, she felt tolerably reconciled to the step. Along with her daughter, who seemed to do, of course, what the mother dictated, she got into the carriage, and Felix ordered it, in the first instance, to drive to Mrs. Faraday's; he there left his Mabella, and took up his aunt Mary, and immedi-

ately set off for F—— Hall. Fortunately, the gentleman was at home and disengaged, and Mr. Bonham explained to him the business he was come on! He was much struck with the several minute circumstances that had led to the Normanburns discovering, even what they had done; but at the same time said, that he saw no possible chance of the family receiving any benefit from these discoveries. He then ordered his clerk to prepare himself, and Mrs. Smith and her daughter repeated again in substance, and nearly in words, what they had said to Mr. Bonham. The whole was committed to writing, and after hearing it read, they made affidavit of the truth of the whole. Mr. ——, who, like Felix, could not help suspecting that they had the will, spent some time in conversation with them on the subject, and at last gave up the point; either the women spoke the truth, or they were perfect mistresses of defence: nothing more could be collected from them,

and at last Mrs. Mary and her nephew, taking leave of this worthy magistrate, returned to their carriage, and after being themselves set down at G—— Hall, sent Mrs. Smith and her daughter home.

The adventures of the evening furnished ample matter for conversation during the remainder of it, and Mrs. Faraday lamented, that they seemed too surely to cut off all hope that she should ever visit Mabella at Normanburn House. She, however, did, and said, all she could to raise the spirits of this all but heiress, on such a complete disappointment; and advised that the husband should be examined by a magistrate at Liverpool, in order to see whether his account tallied with that of the woman.

Mrs. Mary wrote the next day to a legal friend of her's there, and after remaining two days longer with Mrs. Faraday, they set out on their return to Purlbeck. As that good lady took leave of Mabella, she begged that she might be

allowed to come to Purlbeck on the day preceding the wedding, and to add herself to the cavalcade to church. "You have not Normanburn," said she, "but you ought to have the state of a Normanburn! I have two carriages at present, and I will bring them both! The General will be delighted to be at the wedding!" Mabella could not refuse such a well-meant offer, and Mrs. Bonhams were much gratified by it. The friends parted in good spirits, and Mabella was soon at Purlbeck in the arms of her papa.

CHAP. IV.

Preparations for an important Event.

THE return of Mabella and her friends was far from rendering Mr. Normanburn a happier man than before: the news they brought, that a will had been actually executed by his grandmother in favour of his family, and that the will was by accident, or design, lost for ever, drove him almost distracted; his mind dwelt on nothing else; he remained shut up in his room as formerly, again neglected his person, and again saw only Parson Bleathead, and occasionally Middlemist.

This conduct, and the cause of it, gave great concern to Mabella and her aunt; and Felix was grieved to see, that at such a time her spirits should be thus depressed. He thought that it might be possible to rouse Mr. Normanburn's pride

on the occasion of his daughter's wedding, and he employed Middlemist to suggest to him, that, as all the neighbourhood would no doubt be assembled on so joyful an occasion, and as the recent reports about the estate would make them particularly attentive to the looks and behaviour of the family, it would be only affording a triumph to the enemy to exhibit any proofs of depression. This, added to various hints from Middlemist, that something more must come of all these discoveries, had, in part, the desired effect; and he even consented to ride up to the Parsonage to see *the picture* which Mrs. Bleathead assured him Mr. Square had now got into nice trim, and that she thought they would all be surprising likenesses.

Mr. Normanburn bore the visit very well; he was received with bows by the country people, and the whole village was out to see Squire Normanburn. This exceedingly gratified the poor man, and he

began to hope that he should go through the ceremony of giving his daughter away with the dignity suitable to his family consequence.

As to Mrs. Glassington, she was literally so busy with preparations, that she had no time for regrets of any kind: and she left the care of entertaining the ladies to the Captain, who, seeing the loss of the will counterbalanced by a good husband for his darling Mabella, was, in truth, not at all ill satisfied.

In the course of the week they heard that old Mr. Lightfoot was come to the House, which was to be prepared for the reception of the young people by the beginning of December; and that he had, in more than one company, complained of the reports put in circulation, chiefly, he said, by the Bonhams, in revenge for the disappointment Mr. Felix had sustained: he did not seem to have heard any thing of Mrs. Smith's visit to F—— Hall, with Mr. Bonham, and he asserted, that if any

thing more were said, he should find a remedy at law for the scandal.

In the mean time, the whole country rung with the subject, and so strong a feeling was excited in favour of the Normanburns, that Mr. Lightfoot had been compelled to remain for some days confined to his own domain.

As the day drew near, Mabella found that she had need of all her courage to support her: the writings were brought at the beginning of the week, and executed in due form; and Mabella bore the scrutiny of the goggle-eyed lawyer, who came with them, very well, because, in truth, she was too much occupied with her own sensations to perceive his looks. She signed her name tolerably legibly, and then retiring with her aunt, left Mr. Bonham to dismiss the gentleman.

On the Wednesday arrived Mrs. Faraday, and, in the evening, Colonel Milson. A note, too, was brought by Lady Brushwood's man, offering her congratulations,

and requesting to know, if her Ladyship's carriage would be of use on the morrow. This offer was rejected; but this offer, and the influx of good company, almost deprived Mrs. Glassington of her senses with joy: it was now, she said, that the Normanburns *were* Normanburns, and she hoped Mabella would behave well, and not cry, when she had so much cause to laugh. "But, surely, aunt, it is very awful!" said Mabella.

"Nonsense, child!" said Mrs. Glassington, "there's nothing at all in it! to be sure, if a woman was marrying a poor scrub of a fellow, that could not afford her salt to her broth, she might think it awful! but when a man is worth something, it's all a mere nothing. Why, child, if I was to be married to-morrow, you would see me just as gay as you see me now!" Mabella smiled at some odd idea that crossed her fancy, and joined her other friends. Both Felix and herself were so little disposed for conversa-

tion, that the Colonel and Mrs. Faraday had almost the whole to themselves: as to the relatives, they sympathized with the beloved children of their hearts, and were too happy to talk much.

In the evening came Mr. Middlemist, full charged with news. He would hardly take time to return the salutations of Mrs. Faraday and Colonel Milson on his introduction to them, before seizing Miss Normanburn's hand, he cried, "Not all the foes of the family can damp the glory of the Normanburn, my fair friend! do you know that half the West Riding will be at your wedding to-morrow morning! nay, don't look at Mr. Bonham! he cannot save you, I can tell you! The report that Miss Normanburn is to give away her liberty to-morrow, added to that of her being the defrauded heiress of Normanburn, has raised a commotion in the county! The Luddites don't make half the noise, and I fancy, myself, that if the

gentlemen above had any intimation of it, we should have a troop of horse to prevent mischief."

"Bless me, Sir! what do you mean?" said Mabella.

I mean, that to-morrow all the world will be at the wedding, for, as Dr. Stunt says, it would be a shame not to see it: and I came to-night to prepare you for the crowds that will surround you: with such a party of friends you have nothing to fear; but I was afraid you might be taken by surprise, and overcome by the suddenness of the thing. As to your friend, Mrs. Bleathead, she is almost killed in your service, but I won't spoil sport by betraying her secret; you'll see to-morrow the fruits of her labours. Her Reverend spouse, too, is now practising an exhortation to matrimonial obedience, which he means to add to the usual ceremony, if you will have the patience to hear him; and the two young ladies are

brushing and curling their hair, that by laying longer in paper, it may not hang about their faces this damp weather."

Though Mr. Middlemist's news at first alarmed Miss Normanburn, she soon recovered her spirits; perhaps, not in reality displeased, that Mr. Bonham should see what once had been the respectability of the family.

The party then resolved itself into a committee on the business of the morrow, and the order of the procession was all arranged by Mrs. Faraday and Mrs. Glassington. In Mrs. Bonham's carriage were to go the Bride, Mrs. Sarah Bonham, Mr. Normanburn and the Captain: in Mr. Bonham's, Mrs. Glassington, and himself. Colonel Milson and Mrs. Faraday were to occupy the Colonel's chariot, while his companion good naturedly permitted Molly Beale, and the three ladies' maids to use her two equipages. This being universally approved, Mr. Middlemist was charged on his return to Burn-

thwaite to tell Mr. Bleathead to be ready at eleven, and to have the church doors kept closed, that, at least, the inside of the sacred edifice might be free from intruders.

A conversation, pleasant enough, ensued, and the Colonel expressing a wish to hear the particulars that had transpired about the will, Mr. Bonham and Middlemist recapitulated them, and all parties agreed, that as Lightfoot had had the opportunity of searching the place for it, he had doubtless destroyed it, as well as the letter. Mr. Normanburn began to look melancholy, and Felix, fearing that any thing might disturb the serenity of his beloved, changed the subject of conversation. But Milson, not seeing his motive, again reverted to it, wishing that he had the old lady's writing table! he would knock it in pieces, but he would find the will. Mr. Normanburn groaned, and Mabella changed colour, and the Colonel, perceiving the error he was committing,

began to talk about himself. "Upon my honour, my dear Mrs. Mary!" said he, "this scene of happiness quite depresses my spirits!"

"Then I must suppose that you are envious, or in love!" answered Mrs. Mary.

"Not envious, and yet very envious!" said the Colonel. "I wish with all my soul my divine Anna were here! positively she should swear and vow love and obedience to-morrow, if it were only to keep up Miss Normanburn's spirits."

"And if she did, you may depend upon it she would break one part of her vow before the week was out," said Mrs. Faraday.

"If she did not, she would not be woman!" cried Middlemist.

"And if she did, you would forgive her!" said the Captain.

"Yes, to be sure!" said Mrs. Glassington; "poor women would have a pretty time of it indeed, if they could not con-

trive to have their own way, and not vex their husbands either!"

"Upon my word, good folks, this conversation is truly encouraging to me," said Felix. "I flatter myself that when Miss Normanburn has heard Mr. Bleathead's excellent discourse, that has made Mrs. Bleathead a *maddle* for wives, and listened, too, to the exhortation of to-morrow (an exhortation, which, to shew my confidence in her, I shall contrive to cut short) she will then, I hope, be convinced, that she must not break this vow."

"Oh! as to Miss Normanburn, she's out of the question!" cried Mrs. Faraday. "I remember what passed at G—— Hall! she'll spoil you quite, I know she will! just as my sister Brentmore spoils the Major."

"I have not the pleasure of knowing Major Brentmore," said Colonel Milson, "but I have heard of him. Pray, Madam, has he recovered from that wound he received nearly twenty years ago?"

"Yes, quite! and I am happy to say, has no other cause to regret it, but on account of the innocent woman, whose prospects in life have been ruined by a mere misconception on the part of her foolish husband," answered Mrs. Faraday.

"Oh!" said Middlemist, "it is now a matter of course that ladies, upon whom suspicions fall, are innocent, injured women! however, husbands are not easily convinced of the truth of that."

"It would have been happy for this lady, if her's had," answered Mrs. Faraday, "for she was not in the least to blame: and I myself, who am very particular with respect to my own sex, have so perfect a confidence in the propriety of her conduct, that when I am in that part of the country I regularly call upon her." Middlemist bowed assent, saying "that of this case, as he knew nothing, he must, of course, bow to Mrs. Faraday's judgment."

By this time Mabella had gone out with her papa to wish him good night, and Felix found her pressed to his bosom in another room.

"Mr. Bonham," said Mr. Normanburn, as soon as he could speak, "if with my Mabella I could give you her estate, I should have not a regret; but it rankles *here*, Mr. Bonham," laying his hand on his heart. "I am taking leave of her to-night as Mabella Normanburn! and I will not salute her again, till she bears your name." He then gave them both his blessing, and very opportunely left Felix for a few moments alone with his Mabella.

What passed during that very short interview, we could never exactly learn; we only know that Miss Normanburn returned with a smile of joy, yet brightening her face, to the company, and that, as the party were to meet the next morning at nine o'clock, the carriages were immediately ordered, and they separated.

CHAP. V.

A happy Reality.

As soon as her friends were gone, and Miss Normanburn had wished her uncle Lucius good-night, she would very wisely, if left to herself, have retired to bed and to sleep; that is, if she could have slept! but her aunt and Molly Beale effectually prevented her. Molly recounted all the good omens and lucky dreams she had had respecting this wedding; she told how often she had fallen up stairs within the last month; how often she had dreamt of a funeral within the last week. She then expatiated on the virtues of Mr. Bumham, as she called him, and told Mabella that he was "such a fine gentleman she had no doubt she would find him a man every inch of him."

"That's no rule, Molly!" cried Mrs

Glassington, "and you must give me leave to know. But come, Bell, my dear, just look over your things, and try them on a bit! Law! what a beautiful lace dress is this Mrs. Mary bought you! and Mrs. Sarah's veil! and it really was very kind in Mrs. Faraday to bring you that handsome scarf! it is a beauty!"

"What's 't lady's name? Mrs. Fartaway?" asked Molly.

This innocent question, proceeding solely from Molly's simplicity and unaptness to catch names, made Mrs. Glassington very angry; and it was sometime before she was calm again. She then renewed her instances to Mabella, to dress herself, just to see how she looked; but Mabella refused, and begged that she might go to bed. This at last her aunt agreed to, after many exhortations to her to go through the ceremony of the morrow with dignity, and instructions to her how to proceed.

Mabella fell asleep a little after mid-

night, and was awake again and up long before the Sun, who had not complaisance enough to rise an hour or two earlier than his stated time to oblige her. When he did get up, however, he found the lovely bride radiant with love and beauty, full dressed to grace his beams ; and her aunt and the rest of the family in a complete bustle: she let them bustle, and fearful of not preserving her tranquillity, she determined not to hurry herself in any respect.

By half past eight Felix and his aunts arrived, and congratulated her on her composed countenance. "My beloved Mahella!" cried the former, saluting her, "this is as it should be! I am now indeed blest! with what different sensations do I now meet my bride; but the retrospect is painful, and we will have nothing painful on this day." The Mrs. Bonhams embraced her tenderly, and told her that the people, cold as the morning was, had already begun to assemble, and that Mrs.

Bleathead was so busy with some nonsense or other, that they had hardly seen her. They then presented her with some valuable jewels, and she passed a happy half hour before the arrival of the rest of the party. They soon sat down to breakfast, at which Molly Beale, in an entirely new dress, and with a cap Mabella had had made in York for her, insisted on waiting upon the bride; and so affected was the faithful old servant at the idea of losing her child, that she wept almost the whole time. Mr. Bonham, fearing this infectious behaviour might go through the party, said something to Molly to divert her attention, when the anxious old woman, catching his hand, cried; "Noo, Mr. Bumham, I whope you 'll be kind to Miss Bell! I whope you will, Sir! You see 't poor bairn's niver been used to no twitting nor scolding, and, I sure, if you should but hod up your finger at her, she'll roar ready to burst her poor heart!" Felix promised

to be as kind to her as Molly herself could! a promise that restored Molly's composure, and that of the rest of the company.

As soon as breakfast was over, the bride-cake was cut, and Felix did not forget what his aunts had said on a former occasion, or the heroic composure of his Mabella, who had since confessed to him all her agonies on that morning. Colonel Milson sat with his elbow leaning on the table, and his eyes fixed on the happy lovers, and when Mrs. Mary asked, "why so sad?" he replied that the envious fit was on him.

At length, the carriages being at the door, Felix asked Mabella if she was ready? and receiving a blushing assent, he begged that he might assist her on with her pelisse: she was soon equipped, and giving her hand to her lover, who seemed scarcely so much master of his nerves as herself, she was conducted by him to the carriage; there he resigned

her, and it was not long before the rest of the party were disposed of in proper order.

The morning was particularly fine for November, (a circumstance that Mr. Normanburn hailed as a lucky omen) and, as the procession proceeded, they heard the merry sound of hundreds of voices hailing them, and crying, "Auld Normanburn for ever! huzza!" When Mr. Normanburn saw Mabella change colour at these sounds, he told her, it was exactly as it should be, and that it doubled his joy on the occasion.

The crowds at the entrance of the village obliged the carriages to go slowly; Jacky Walker, on his stick, riding before them, and Dr. Stunt bare headed by the side, and when Mabella reached the church-yard gate, her fortitude was nearly overcome. Within its walls, on each side of the fine avenue of elms that led to the church door, stood all the tenants of the family, dressed in their best array,

with white favours at their breasts, and a little behind them, their wives and daughters, all habited in white. They bowed and curtsied in solemn silence to Mr. Normanburn, as he led his daughter to the church door, and their respect and sympathy being voluntary and disinterested, was inexpressibly grateful to the family. The tears ran down the father's, as well as the daughter's cheeks, as they returned the salutation; and the Captain cried, "Thank you, my friends! thank you! this is *a victory*." The salutations were repeated to Mrs. Glassington and Mr. Bonham, and some of the good wives whispered that he was a *right proper man*.

When Mabella entered the church, she was met by the Reverend Mr. Bleathead, with a wig that rivalled her own feathers in whiteness, and he preceded her up the aisle, on each side of which stood his models of obedience in their best

clothes, and each with a huge cockade at his breast. Had Mabella had her attention at liberty to observe them, she would have seen that Mrs. Bleathead's economy was visible, even here; for the cockades were only slips of writing paper cut and stitched up by the fair hands of the Miss Bleatheads. Mrs. Bleathead and her daughters, in new dresses made for the occasion, were, with several of their friends in the pews near the communion table, and before the ceremony began, the church was filled with people. As Felix stood by Mabella, he whispered her to preserve her presence of mind, and she went through the service tolerably well. Mr. Bleathead had reached the word *amazement*, and seemed about to add something else, when Felix, bowing, thanked him; and presenting his bride to her friends, the poor Parson was so hurried, that he lost the opportunity of pronouncing what he had been a week prac-

tising: he, however, resolved that his parishioners should have it in their next Sunday's discourse.

As the bridal party were to go on to York from church, they took leave of Mrs. Faraday, Middlemist, Colonel Milson, and old Molly, before they returned to their carriages, and after thanking Mrs. Bleathead for the compliment they had received from her, and said adieu to her and her Reverend spouse, as well as Dr. Stunt, Felix took the hand of his Mabella, and led her out to his own carriage: she was proceeding down the avenue, when the oldest tenant of her grandmother, invoking a blessing on her husband, begged to kiss her hand. Mabella could not refuse, and all the rest following in succession, she was thus detained, and surrounded for a considerable time: she attempted to thank them, but her words died on her lips, and Felix making a sign that he wished to be heard, the people ceased speaking, and he ad-

dressed them. "Mrs. Bonham, my good friends, would thank you, but her emotions will not allow her! permit me to do so for her: you must, I am sure, feel for her situation, and will no longer detain her." This was received with great applause by all who heard it. Mabella proceeded to her carriage, and with her aunt Mary, and her beloved Felix, began her journey to York amidst the huzzas and good wishes of the populace, (many of whom cried out for the *true will*) and the ringing of the church bells; and Mr. Bleathead's dinner bell, in honour of her, tolled till the rope broke.

As soon as they were out of the village, poor Mabella, who had kept up her spirits to the last stretch, burst into tears, and was clasped to the heart of her delighted and grateful Felix, who commended, with great reason, the self-command she had shewn: again and again did he thank her for the happiness she had conferred on him, and call upon his aunt for her congratulations.

"You have them, my dear children, from my inmost soul!" said Mrs. Mary, "but, I have no words to express what I feel. The *people* have pleased me; they have shewn a sense of rectitude that delights me! our poor misguided Cecilia can *never* be so received!" "She is not married to a Felix Bonham!" cried Mabella; and I can hardly persuade myself that I am so blest! so very blest! that Felix is really my husband!"

CHAP. VI.

Something beyond Expectation, or true Friends.— The Conclusion.

It is not our intention so far to encroach on the patience of our readers, as to give a minute detail of a wedding-day! they have had love scenes in abundance, and, in truth, the whole party was so composed by the time the sound of the beautiful bells of the Minster met their ears, that they sat comfortably down to a handsome dinner, without any extraordinary emotion.

The only observation that passed, worth recording, was one made by Mrs. Glassington, who said that she looked hard at Mr. Middlemist, during the ceremony, and that she thought he appeared as if matrimony would be catching. The Captain groaned on hearing this, and Felix mischievously asserted, that he paid

such particular attention to Mrs. Faraday, and she looked so kindly on him, that he should not wonder if he laid the General in the Red Sea for ever.

Poor Mrs. Glassington, ready to cry for vexation, appealed to Mabella, if *she* saw any symptoms of the sort, and received for answer that she could not have a different opinion to Mr. Bonham. This little cloud, however, soon vanished away, and the Captain said, he should like Middlemist for a brother, very well, indeed!

The day and the evening passed over, as such days and evenings usually do, and the following morning proving fine, Mrs. Bonhams contrived to carry off their new guests to see the Minster; by this attention leaving Felix and his blushing Mabella two or three hours to themselves to talk over their future plans and prospects. The Admiral had written so handsomely when he received the news of his son's intention of marrying Miss Normanburn,

that Felix was not surprised, when, as he and Mabella were enjoying their tête-à-tête, a letter came from his father to Mrs. Felix Bonham, inclosing a draft for a thousand pounds, as a wedding present: it was accompanied with an earnest invitation to them both to meet him in town in January, and take up their residence with him in Portland Place. If this made Mabella happy, it made Felix still more so, for he knew Mabella's wish to be valued by every part of his family. Their friends did not return till dinner time, and Mabella was gratified to see that her father seemed to enjoy himself a good deal: she augered well for his future tranquillity from this, and as to her uncle, she easily perceived that he was quite an altered man.

The whole party retired to bed early, and Mabella was already asleep in the arms of her happy husband, when a carriage drove furiously up to the door, at which a servant knocked most violently.

Felix, alarmed for his aunts, jumped out of bed, and ran to ascertain who it was that thus disturbed the family, when he was answered by his friend Milson, who begged the door might be instantly opened, and that the family would meet him in the drawing-room. The first part of his request was easily granted, and the fright, he had occasioned, procured him the second, for the two Mr. Normanburns were soon visible, and not long after Mrs. Bonhams and Mabella, with Mrs. Glassington. Colonel Milson looked a good deal agitated: he made a sort of apology for the fright, but said a business that—a something—when Middlemist came quietly into the room, and, walking up to Mrs. Felix Bonham, said, "I am happy, Madam, that it falls to my lot to bring good news—*that*, (presenting a parcel) that is your great-grandmother's will!" A sudden burst of joy, nay, even incredulous joy, filled the room. Mabella stood motionless with the parcel in her hand. Mrs.

Glassington clasped Middlemist round the neck, till he was nearly choaked, and it was with difficulty he released himself; Mr. Normanburn on his knees uttered loud ejaculations; while the Captain having by accident snapped the wooden leg he had buckled on in haste, seized the broken part, and performed so many cuts and flourishes with it, as he sat on the floor, that Mrs. Glassington's legs could boast the marks of his prowess long after. The two good aunts were beseeching the Colonel to explain all this, when Mabella, suddenly fainting in her husband's arms, restored them all to their recollection. Felix carried her off to bed, where, he said, he would take care of her, and where she soon after revived; but he would not allow her to join her friends any more that night: at her earnest request, however, he left her, to hear how and where this will had been discovered.

Mr. Middlemist had by this time recovered from the effects of his own exhi-

laration and Mrs. Glassington's hug, and, at the request of all present, he related what follows.

"When you all left us yesterday, the Colonel, after paying the last attentions to Mrs. Faraday, accompanied me home, and favoured me by staying another night with me. We discussed many subjects, some amusing enough, but not to the purpose, and among the rest the affair of the will. The Colonel repeated, what, he says, he said the night before last, that, if he could meet with the old oak table, he would knock it in pieces; as, if Lightfoot had not found the will, *there* it must be. It immediately struck me, that the oak writing table, I had bought at the sale at Normanburn before Angelo came of age, might be the very thing: I wondered I had not sooner thought of it; but it is never too late to do well! the Colonel assisted me to take out the things I had put in, and we spent some hours in trying every board, inside and out, without ef-

fect. At last, the Colonel asked, if I had any objection to have it taken in pieces? hopeless as I was, I could not object to it, and this morning we got Simpson, who was originally a carpenter to help us. I won't tell you our disappointments, but at last we were rewarded! beneath a board, so well contrived that we had not seen the spring or the junction, we found the will and the letter. Guess our joy! we had had almost a day's work; but we were amply rewarded! We swore Jobson to secrecy, until we should absolve him; and the Colonel ordering his horses to his carriage, here we are."

We will not trouble our readers with the thanks these two indefatigable friends received, or the happiness Mabella experienced, when her husband repeated this to her: she laid awake for joy! sleep was out of the question. Suffice it to say, that, when all met on the morrow, she expressed her gratitude in the most delightful manner.

Determined to prosecute his wife's right, Mr. Bonham lost no time in putting the business into the hands of proper lawyers, and proceedings had already gone to some length, when, about six weeks after, they heard of the sudden death of old Lightfoot. The near relationship of Mrs. Angelo Lightfoot made Mrs. Felix Bonham anxious, if possible, to come to a compromise; but her husband would not hear of it: both parties being sure of success, the cause was tried, and the last will, believed to be genuine, established.

The Normanburns were now at the summit of their wishes, and when Mr. Bonham and Mabella returned from Devonshire, where they spent the summer, they had the happiness of seeing Mr. Normanburn, his brother and sister, comfortably established at Normanburn. The Mrs. Bonhams came there to meet them, and all parties regretted that Mr. Middlemist, who had left Burnthwaite soon after

his visit to York, was not there to share the enjoyment his own friendly zeal had produced: their regret, however, was not long, for he arrived within a fortnight after, accompanied by a lady, whom he introduced as his wife. Mrs. Felix Bonham welcomed Mrs. Middlemist most kindly; but Middlemist, interrupting her, said: "My dear Madam, I must no longer deceive you! this lady has no more right to the name of Middlemist than myself; we are called Maddison:" he then related his duel with Major Brentmore, which the reader already knows, and his subsequent reconciliation with his wife, in consequence of what Mrs. Faraday had said. "My Julia," said he, "has had the magnanimity to forgive me! it is more than I can do myself! but the residue of my life shall be dedicated to endeavour to make her comfortable!"

Nothing could exceed Mrs. Glassington's mortification, when she found all her former cares had been lavished on a

married man; as, however, her niece had made her perfectly independent, she was not long before she met with a husband in a half-pay Captain, who resided at York, and she was transplanted into a soil that exactly suited her.

The Bleatheads were rendered happy by receiving from the Normanburns the same kindness as usual, and Mr. Bleathead has lately published his Sermon on Marriage, and dedicated it to Mr. Bonham. Colonel Milson and his lady took Normanburn on their way down to her father's, after passing the spring in town, and Mabella was so much pleased with Mrs. Milson, that as strict a friendship ensued between the ladies, as there was already subsisting between their husbands, and it still continues unimpaired.

Old Molly was so attached to Purlbeck, that she would not reside at Normanburn, except on the occasion of Mrs. Bonham's first confinement, when she saw the son and heir born, and thrust a lump of

butter and sugar down his little throat, according to custom! since that time the cottage has been her own domain, and she has the old establishment, with an additional maid-servant at her command.

As Mr. Angelo Lightfoot's fortune, without Normanburn, is very respectable, and Mr. Bonham, at Mabella's request, claimed no restitution of income, he still continues to mix in the gay world, and Cecilia has more than once met Mabella and her husband: she invariably accosts Mabella with perfect good breeding, and Felix with a sort of air, as if her ancient tenderness for him might without much trouble be revived:. he, however, gives her no encouragement, being so really enamoured of his wife, especially since she became a mother, that, as Mrs. Glassington says, he has no eyes for any body else.

Miss Trehern is turned Methodist, and being considered a good fat lamb of the fold, is soon to be married to young

preaching saint, who wants a fortune. Scandal has been a little busy with her shape, lately, and the Captain, who had met her in the streets of York, said, drily, that the saints were increasing, and that he should advise her to have a father for the young drummer.

As to the Ladies Pleasance and Sophy, they are both married to Peers of the realm, and the Chatterers yet remain without husbands.

Mrs. Faraday still retains her belief that the General partakes of all her amusements, but as she is now successively the guest and the hostess of the Bonhams and Maddisons, she is less alone, and much more comfortable than she used to be.

Thus having brought our true and faithful history to a conclusion, we heartily wish the reader as much bliss as our hero and our heroine are enjoying, and it's long continuance! for ourselves, it is our decided opinion, that if in childhood the

affections of the heart were allowed to expand, and rightly directed, instead of being smothered under a heap of gibberish, falsely called education, the world would be better fitted for happiness than it is. But we aim not at making converts to common sense! we are contented to amuse, and we doubt not that those, who can penetrate through the mere outside, will say, that, *while amusing we instruct.*

FINIS.

BARNARD AND FARLEY,
Skinner street, London